

NOVEMBER 15, 2004

MARGARET CHO
ON THE PRESIDENTIAL COCKFIGHT

IN THESE TIMES

I WANT YOU

to Stop Bush's Assault on America



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Special Issue

A PATTERN OF FAILURE



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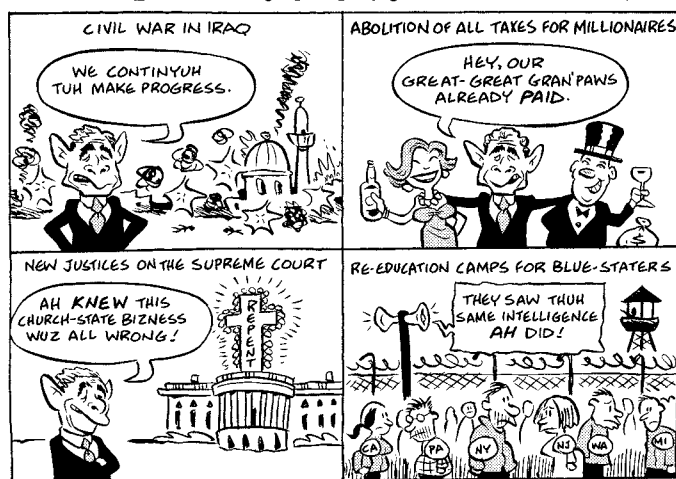
“I am a firm believer in the people.
If given the truth,
they can be depended upon
to meet any national crisis.
The great point is
to bring them the real facts.”

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

IF BUSH WINS

TERRY LABAN

A LOOK
AHEAD by TERRY LABAN



Editorial

The Choice is Yours By Joel Bleifuss

Some on the left have lately taken to hyperbole—comparing George W. Bush and his administration to Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany. Bush is not a fascist who has institutionalized repression and

executed the opposition, but several of his tactics nonetheless should send chills down our collective spine.

The Bush administration demonstrably and repeatedly lied about why we went to war in Iraq and now many Americans believe Saddam Hussein posed a threat to world peace with his links to al Qaeda.

Republicans put anti-gay initiatives on the ballots in as many states as possible, pandering to fears of conservatives who feel beset by what they see as cultural degenerates.

And this summer the Department of Education destroyed 300,000 copies of *Helping Your Child Learn History*. The 73-page booklet, which referenced the National Standards for United States History developed in the mid-'90s for the U.S. Department of Education, was “recycled” at the behest of Lynne Cheney, wife of the vice president. In the '90s, as a fellow of the American Enterprise Institute, Cheney went on a crusade against the history standards—upset that they mentioned Harriet Tubman six times, Joe McCarthy and McCarthyism 29 times, and the Ku Klux Klan 17 times but did not mention

Robert E. Lee.

In what appears to be the most recent in a line of dirty tricks, the Lucas County Democratic Headquarters in Toledo, Ohio, was broken into October 12. Although the thieves left behind a cashbox, they stole computers containing sensitive information about candidate schedules, financial information, and phone numbers of party members, candidates, donors and volunteers. Lucas County, home to many moderate Republicans, is a crucial battleground in a battleground state. As Republican National Committee Chairman Ed Gillespie put it, the county is “the epicenter of the epicenter.” Among the computers taken was one belonging to an attorney working with the Kerry campaign to ensure election security.

Can the country survive another term filled with propaganda, prejudice and dirty tricks?

The election of John Kerry would put America on a path to a different future. He has a 20-year history as a solid liberal who has sought to uphold democratic

traditions. In the '80s, he spoke out against the Reagan administration's illegal proxy wars in Central America. He dared to hold committee hearings examining the links between the CIA-backed Contras and drug cartels. But most important, he has had the courage to tell the truth—when he returned from Vietnam and more recently in exposing Bush's lies for what they are.

Yes, he voted for the Iraq war, but here is what he said when he did so:

Bush is no fascist, but several of his tactics should send chills down our collective spine.

By casting about in an unfocused, undisciplined, overly public, internal debate for a rationale for war, the administration complicated their case, confused the American public, and compromised America's credibility in the eyes of the world community. ... Against this disarray, it is not surprising that tough questions began to be asked and critics began to emerge. ... Criticism and questions do not reflect a lack of patriotism—they demonstrate the strength and core values of our American democracy.

Bush is no fascist, but he certainly is the leader of a political movement that has betrayed democratic traditions and undermined America's standing in the world.

We cannot afford four more years. ■

Letters



Logic Need Not Apply

Daniel Rose's letter is memorable for its accurate depiction of a syllogism ("Twisted Logic," October 11). However, Mr. Rose would do well to heed the words of Theodore H. White, who wrote in 1986 that "American politics leaves logic behind."

No third party has a realistic chance of winning the White House in November. To cast a vote for third-party candidate is to send a message—it is a protest vote.

Ralph Nader's official campaign Web site is explicit in stating that one of his primary goals in running is not so much to win, but to "help bring out more people who may vote down-ticket for some independent thinkers in the House and Senate."

If Ralph Nader was truly interested in fostering a new era of third-party politics in America, he would do well to effect change from within the system. Presumably, there is

a senator or representative in his district against whom he could run. Should Ralph win a seat in Congress, he might then inspire other "down-ticket" candidates to run as well. If enough of them won, we might see a shift away from the current two-party system.

Casting a vote for Nader will not help unseat King George II. Only a Kerry vote will.

Steve Sutton
Houston

Raving Mad

Representative Bernie Sanders, I agree with you ("Time to Commit," October 11). I agree that it is "time to commit!" It is time to commit the entire corrupted electoral process to the loony bin and insane asylum.

Imagine a "progressive" pandering to our fears! You suggest that that which you warn us about under a returned Bush administration won't happen under a Kerry

administration. Please. As if Kerry is not part and parcel of the corporate America you rail against. Let us not insult the people's intelligence.

Both of the two major party multi-millionaire candidates are corporate mouthpieces who have little conception what a loaf of bread or quart of milk costs or what it means to worry about losing health insurance. Perhaps, what insults me the most, Bernie, if I may use the congressman's favorite word, what I find the most "outrageous" is the theft of my vote for Ralph Nader. A vote for Nader is a vote for Nader. Kerry has no entitlement to my vote and no one, not even the longest serving "independent" in the House, is going to guilt-trip me into voting the way they want me to. Let us not make a mockery out of what little democracy remains.

Twenty years ago when you ran for Congress people were arguing that a vote for you was a vote for the Republican candidate because you were taking votes away from the Democrat. Twenty years ago you rejected this argument and today, you embrace it. I say, shame!

Jozef Hand-Boniakowski
Wells, Vt.

Immortal Psychotics

Joel Bleifuss' editorial "Silence of the Dems" (August 30) is right on the money. When

the Supreme Court decreed that corporations were "persons" with all of the attendant rights but none of the obligations, they loosed a terrible blight upon our society. I say this because each of the 50 states allows corporations to have "perpetual existence." This, in and of itself, might not be so bad—were it not for the psychotic personality that Bleifuss so accurately warns us of.

A bunch of psychotic immortals that can survive without clean air and water, and one driven solely by profit motive is a very dangerous thing to allow to affect our environmental policies through campaign contributions. One of the few rights that corporations do not have as "persons" is the right to vote and, accordingly they should not be allowed to affect our elections by the outright purchase of legislators through campaign contributions. We had better get some meaningful campaign reform before it is too late.

Rick Garnett
Idaho Springs, Colo.

Joel Bleifuss' "Silence of the Dems" contains a significant error, in my opinion. "Corporations are the dominant form of economic organization in our world. That is not going to change." I suggest that the labor of women is the dominant form of economic organization in our world and that, when women take back their unthinking cooperation with corporations, change occurs.

It is already ongoing in many places. Every small-scale food grower, clothing maker, home builder, child bearer, tender and rearer who works with her

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DISCUSSION

"The reason Bush has such great support and will likely win the election is demonstrated by Hans Johnson's "Fiction First, Spin Later." Mr. Bush will probably thank him personally. This type of rhetoric is so slanted, it only appeals to the smallest percentage of voters who are anti-Republican, and anti-Bush to the core. Certainly, Kerry has the dishonest Michael Moore's vote, but most of the voters are offended by this bias—as we'll witness in November. The swing voters, which are needed for Kerry to win, are completely turned off by the exaggerations of left wing journalists."

Join the online forum for "Fiction First, Spin Later."

neighbors is already keeping her power and starving the corporate world of her energy and validation of corporate legitimacy. My backyard garlic, tomato and zucchini and my front yard meadow are tiny plants growing through the cracked world of the corporate industrial food and lawn system. My tiny drip, drip of non-cooperation in paying war taxes and playing the "get a job game" undermines that great corporate charade.

Hooray for women! They are the great economists and leaders for sanity, sustainability and security.

*Margie Eucalyptus
Kansas City, Mo.*

Hit Real Issues

If Kerry were smart he would make Susan J. Douglas Chief of Staff of his election team ("Get Real, Man," Oct 25)! All human beings are concerned about security. Hit the REAL homeland security issues like jobs, pay checks, health care, education, and environment, to name just a few.

Right now Kerry's campaign seems determined, as was Gore's, to "snatch defeat from the jaws of victory." Take a page from Clinton's manual: "It's the economy, stupid."

*Shel Trapp
Chicago*



Lampooning or lambasting, the posters in *A Presidential Rogues Gallery* hold their subjects to account, poke fun at their foibles and serve as a call to action on a range of causes. The 60 satirical posters dating back 30 years are part of a new exhibit curated by the Center for the Study of Political Graphics (www.politicalgraphics.org) on view 10:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays through November 22 in the offices of *In These Times*.

And don't miss the exhibit's opening event 7 p.m. October 23. Cirque Du Politique will include performances by the Chicago comedy-troupe Schadenfreude, highbrow mingling with Billionaires for Bush and a screening of *A Patriot Act*, a new film featuring renowned media critic Mark Crispin Miller. Suggested donation: \$5.

IN THESE TIMES

"With liberty and justice for all..."

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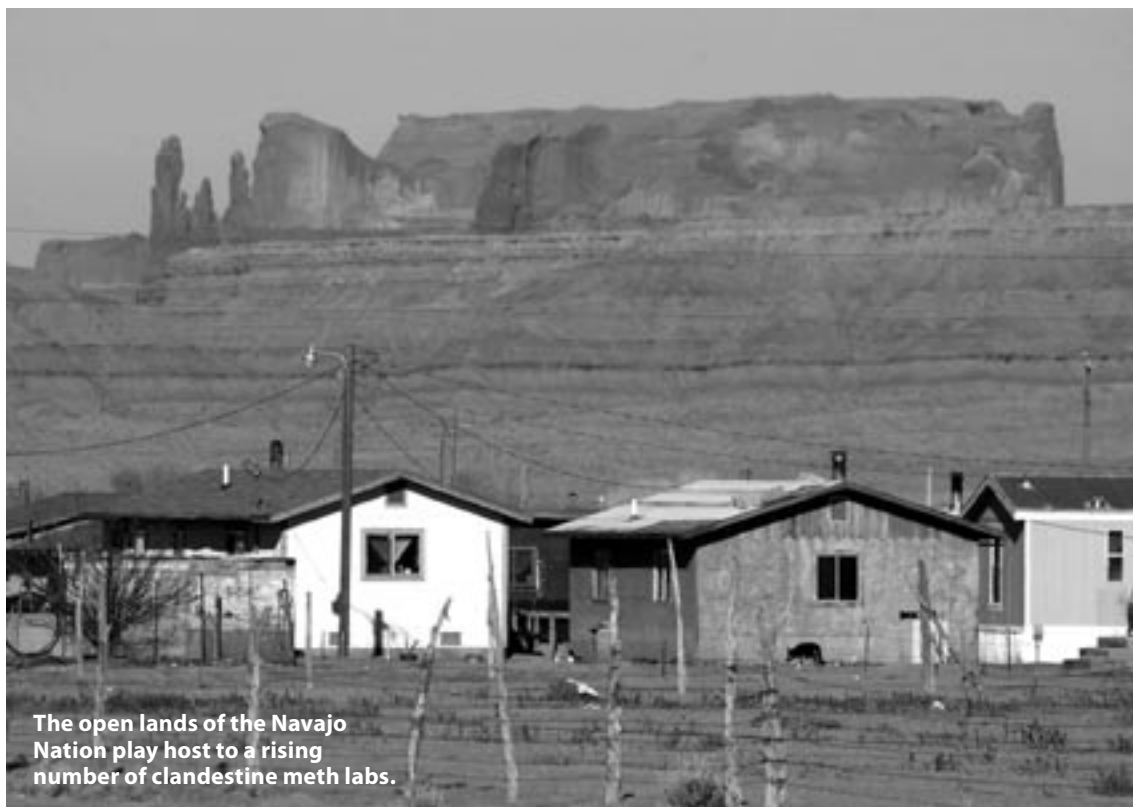
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The open lands of the Navajo Nation play host to a rising number of clandestine meth labs.

DAVID MCNEW / GETTY

High Times

A Navajo town deals with the ravages of the latest addictive drug, crystal meth. *By Dan Frosch*

DR. THOMAS DROUHARD REMEMBERS THE first time he stared the drug dead in its eye five years ago.

He was on duty at the only hospital in Tuba City, Arizona, a dusty town of some 9,000 deep inside the Navajo reservation, when a woman was rushed into the emergency room with nine stab wounds to the chest.

"I'd never seen anything like it," says Drouhard, a warm, easygoing man who has worked as a surgeon on Navajo land for nearly three decades. "Looking back on that level of violence, I now know exactly what it was."

Meth, a highly addictive white powder made from over-the-counter ingredients like iodine, Drano and ephedrine, gives users a rush that can last eight hours. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, it also causes a propensity toward psychotic behavior.

It was the effects of crystal methamphetamine that began wreaking havoc on rural, overwhelmingly white

Midwest towns in the early '90s. Between 1995 and 2002, meth-related emergency room visits nationwide jumped 54 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and cities from New York to San Francisco all have experienced recent outbreaks.

Tuba City might be getting it worse. There were 14 meth-related deaths here last year, a staggering number for a town this size. A local health department study found that 12 percent of Tuba's teens were using meth, as were 17 percent of residents between the age of 27 and 45. A third of the patients screened at the emergency room now test positive for the drug.

Among the reasons the drug has hit the area so hard, local police say, is that the reservation's vast frontier lends itself to the clandestine labs used to produce meth (the Navajo Nation is about the size of West Virginia). It's also cheap—a quarter of a gram, enough to get a person high for a few days, runs \$20 to \$40.

An Illegal War

November 19, the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) will hold a hearing regarding the refugee status of Brandon Hughey, a 19-year-old former American soldier who deserted his Army unit and moved to Canada to avoid deployment in Iraq.

Hughey's fate—and the fate of two other American soldiers, Jeremy Hinzman, 25, and David Sanders, 20, who similarly fled to Canada to avoid serving in Iraq and are awaiting immigration hearings—hinges on whether he can prove that he would face "persecution" should he return to the United States. If the IRB rejects his application, Hughey would be forced to return to the United States, where he would face a dishonorable discharge and prosecution for desertion, which could result in a lengthy prison term or even, though less likely, execution.

Historically, it has been difficult to prove that the United States persecutes its citizens for their beliefs, and the IRB does not consider punishment for breaking a law tantamount to persecution—unless the law itself can be considered a form of persecution.

That caveat is exactly what Hughey and his lawyer, Jeffry House, believe will turn the case in their favor. Citing the Nuremberg Principles—which state that a person committing a crime under international law, even if committed under the order "of his Government or of a superior," is still guilty of that crime—House will argue that because the war in Iraq was not sanctioned under international law, his client was being coerced into committing a criminal act.

The War Resisters Support Campaign, a coalition of Canadian community organizations, has launched a petition drive that calls on the Canadian government "to demonstrate its commitment to international law and the treaties to which it is a signatory, by making provision for U.S. war objectors to have sanctuary in this country."

The petition can be read in full online at: www.petitiononline.com/resister/petition.html

—Brian Cook

Further, crystal meth is not yet prohibited under Navajo law, preventing law enforcement from prosecuting cases in tribal court, which has jurisdiction over most crimes on tribal lands. This forces Navajo police to trek 79 miles to Flagstaff to arraign meth suspects in federal court.

Compounding all of this, the Navajo long have been vulnerable to addiction—almost one quarter of the reservation's 190,000 residents are unemployed and the rate of alcoholism is six times that of the entire United States.

Levon Hatathlie, a drug and alcohol counselor for the Tuba City Department of Behavioral Health Sciences, says she rarely saw anyone on meth until two years ago. Now, Hatathlie works with 13 users. Most are young adults, but a 15-year-old recently walked into her office. "It was shocking," she said.

With meth use becoming so widespread, the drug has caught the eye of a FBI task force in Flagstaff, working violent crimes on the western half of Navajo land as part of a cooperative agreement with the Navajo tribal government.

Though actual numbers are hard to come by, the rate of violence is greater than ever, says Agent McDonald Rominger.

"Instead of just one violent act, which is what we see with alcohol, it becomes five random acts of violence when someone is on a meth run," Rominger said.

Greg Adair, a Navajo police investigator in Tuba City, says meth-induced crimes like that of a 24-year-old Navajo man stabbed 21 times last year—both he and his assailant were thought to be on meth—are of a brutality rarely seen before in Tuba City. Recent signs indicate meth-related crimes are worsening. On September 24, for instance, Navajo police seized 5 pounds of meth from a car pulled over outside Tuba City. Three days later, an 18-month-old baby was found dead near Tuba City. His parents were high on meth and had abandoned him.

FBI Agent Nick Manns, who works the eastern half of the Navajo reservation 240 miles from Tuba City, says that 40 percent of the crimes he now deals with are meth-related.

But because of the oversight in tribal law, arresting someone for possessing meth on Navajo land is difficult.

Last year, the U.S. Attorney's office in Flagstaff agreed to let police bring meth suspects arrested on Navajo land to federal court, even though the federal system is typically designed for larger interstate drug trafficking cases. Since then, Navajo police,

working with the FBI, have brought 16 meth cases to Flagstaff, but law enforcement officials say the numbers would be far higher if they could move meth cases through the considerably less burdened tribal court system.

Deanna Jackson, spokeswoman for Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, says a Navajo law prohibiting meth on tribal land is coming soon. "President Shirley is working towards drafting legislation we hope will be introduced during the next legislative session in October."

Meanwhile, the Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation isn't waiting around. Director Michelle Archuleta has launched a massive prevention campaign—conducting studies, sending experts and police into schools, consulting with tribal elders, and commissioning Navajo filmmaker Shonie De La Rosa to produce a documentary.

"We're trying to improve the wellness of this community from a native perspective by including entire Navajo families and also Navajo spiritual philosophies in our outreach," Archuleta said.

Such localized efforts are clearly having an impact: There were only three meth-related deaths this year, although the drug now is spreading beyond Tuba City disturbingly fast.

And the losses remain painfully personal. Yvonne Hoosava, a secretary in the Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation and lieutenant governor of the Upper Village of Moenkopi, a nearby town on the Hopi reservation, cries quietly when discussing her meth-addicted son.

"If you've seen the movie *The Exorcist*, that's exactly how he sounded," Hoosava said as she talked of the meth binge her son went on last year. "It was like the devil was talking."

Dennis Bowen, a counselor at Tuba City's alternative high school, has faith that these new demons can be combated using cultural ties. By reinforcing Navajo culture in some and introducing it to others, Bowen is hoping to reaffirm an identity that he believes is strong enough to overcome the meth problem.

"We have protective factors that other places don't—our elders, our language, our traditions," Bowen said. "And because of who we are, we have the potential to get this thing under control. ... We're not helpless." ■

DAN FROSCH is an award-winning journalist based in New York.

Demise of Democracy

Putin orders a massive overhaul of Russia's political system to combat terrorists. By Fred Weir

RUSSIA'S DEMOCRATIC window, never pried open very wide following the Soviet Union's demise, is slamming shut.

Citing a summer wave of terrorist attacks that killed 430 people, President Vladimir Putin last month ordered sweeping changes to the country's political system that will effectively abolish regional gubernatorial elections, sharply reduce the space for independent politics and accelerate the pro-Kremlin United Russia Party's merger with the state bureaucracy to create a single party-state behemoth reminiscent of the former Communist Party of the Soviet Union. "After these changes I am in a state of shock," says Yevgeny Ya-

sin, a former Russian Economics Minister, now head of research at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow. "This is directed against the democratization of the country and can only lead to an authoritarian regime."

Boris Yeltsin destroyed Russia's first freely elected parliament in a violent confrontation 11 years ago and used his victory to write a new constitution that granted the lion's share of power to the Kremlin while reducing the legislature to little more than ornamental status. Since coming to power about 5 years ago, Putin has further shrunk the role of elected representatives, reimposed state control over much of the media, cracked down on politically active

nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and beefed-up security services. Each turn of the screw has been rationalized by increasingly severe terrorist attacks, from a wave of still-unexplained apartment bombings in 1999, to the seizure of 800 hostages in a Moscow theater two years ago, to the horrific siege of a North Caucasus school last month that killed 330 people, mostly children (see "The Bloodiest Chapter," October 11).

A raft of Kremlin-authored bills are currently before the State Duma, where United Russia's two-thirds majority is expected to deliver them with few amendments into law before year's end. The most controversial ones will claw back

the right of Russia's 89 regions to directly elect their governors—won after considerable struggle a decade ago. Instead, the Kremlin will propose its own candidate to be "endorsed" by each local legislature.

If regional lawmakers should reject the president's nominee, the draft law empowers the Kremlin to dissolve the uncooperative legislature and appoint an "interim governor" entitled to serve for five years. Putin argues the measures are needed to restore central authority and curb abuses by governors, some of whom have been in thrall to local oligarchs or crime bosses. But critics see the move as a cynical power grab.

"Putin wants to use this opportunity to destroy the last vestiges of Yeltsin-era democracy," says Alexander Golts, a national security expert with the weekly *Yezhenedelny Zhurnal*. "Instead of attacking terrorists, he's attacking our electoral system."



On Health Care, Their Plans Are Clear



George W. Bush and John Kerry couldn't be more different when it comes to health care.

**November 2nd,
Vote Like Your Health Depends On It**

For more information on their plans, or to become a health care voter,
visit www.ImAHealthCareVoter.org

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APPALL-O-METER



OLEG NIKISHIN / GETTY

The people of Beslan read lists of those killed in the hostage crisis.

Another draft law would truncate Russia's mixed electoral process, under which half of the State Duma's 450 seats were chosen proportionally through voting for centrally compiled party lists, and the other half through first-past-the-post local constituency races. Under the new system all deputies will be elected from party lists, a change that will crush regional independents and strengthen the hand of big Moscow-based parties, especially the state-backed United Russia.

"Putin [says he] wants to create an American-style two party system, which would increase stability in a huge and volatile country like Russia," says Sergei Strokan, a political expert who writes for the liberal daily *Kommersant*. "But the problem is that Russia lacks any developed, independent political parties. The state already dominates the political field, and therefore these measures could just end up enhancing the bureaucracy."

Another, less-noticed bill would lift the Yeltsin-era ban on senior civil servants joining a political party. That can only benefit the Kremlin's creature, United Russia, which has burgeoned to 700,000 members in the past year—about twice the size of its nearest conceivable rival, Russia's post-Soviet Communist Party. Nearly half of all

regional governors, eager to curry favor with the Kremlin, have joined United Russia, most in the past month.

"As soon as bureaucrats see that a tightly centralized power system is returning into force in Russia, there is no doubt they will rush to join the party of power," says Sergei Kolmakov, vice president of the independent Foundation for the Development of Parliamentarism in Moscow. "When the bureaucratic chain-of-command becomes consolidated into a single party, that party will dominate the state and the nation. People from all sections of the elite will also want to join, to get closer to the sources of power."

The public culture of fear and suspicion that marked the last century's Stalinist experiment in central state-building also is creeping back. "In our besieged country there has emerged a fifth column of left and right radicals," said Vladislav Surkov, deputy head of the Kremlin administration, in a recent interview with the daily *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, in which he hammered at "enemies" inside and outside the country. "False liberals and real fascists have more and more in common, the same foreign sponsors, the same hatred toward Putin's Russia, as they say, but in fact toward Russia as such." ■

2.3 Christological Fisticuffs

In a cheering sign of robust intellectual ferment in the red states, two students at the University of North Carolina came to blows over the question of which candidate Jesus would vote for, were He to exercise His duty as a citizen in November's presidential election. The students had been watching the first presidential debate, reports the Durham (N.C.) *Herald-Sun*, when the argument broke out. One of the young men cited the Lord's well-known Other Cheek proviso, whereupon the other slapped him. Cuffs were exchanged and medical help soon had to be called for. The contest yielded no arrests and no conclusions, except perhaps that Alan Keyes ran for Senate in the wrong state.



4.1 Who Will Tell the People?

Thank the Lord for plucky little paladins of journalistic objectivity like the Sinclair Broadcasting Group. The company, which owns or operates 62 TV stations nationwide, will add valuable new data to the historical record by airing *Stolen Honor*. This documentary, company officials promise, will pull back the pall of censorship and allow the story of an obscure, persecuted band of patriots finally to be told. They're called the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth.

Liberals have pointed out, in their pharisaical way, that the documentary isn't quite news. And, they argue, considering that it will air just before the election, it consti-

tutes an in-kind contribution to the Bush-Cheney campaign, thus violating federal communications law.

Not true, shot back Sinclair executive Mark Hyman. The news media have taken no notice of the aggrieved veterans. "They chose to suppress them," he insisted on CNN. "[The networks] are acting like Holocaust deniers, pretending these men don't exist."

2.9 Nothing's Too Good for the Pundit Class

What becomes a populist TV barker most? Why, a private jet, of course—and not one of those inferior makes, either, bub. Sean Hannity, famous for his hot denunciations of the "elitist" lifestyles of the Kerrys and Kennedys, has apparently broken the hearts of some Washington University law stu-

dents who wanted to bring him to campus to speak. The reason: They couldn't come up with a brand of private jet the people's pundit likes.

Personal remonstrance proved fruitless. "He was very forceful on the phone," jilted organizer Ruth Hollander told *Student Life*, a campus newspaper. "It was hard to get a word in edgewise with him. He was interrupting me a lot."

Hollander's colleague, Melinda Gorman, complained that the organizers had to cancel the four off-duty police officers Hannity had requested for extra security and to eat the costs of printing 250 publicity posters, which, Gorman sadly noted, "are still sitting in the back of my SUV."

—Dave Mulcahey



This year's presidential election has spurred massive registration drives. States are hiring extra help to process applications and to implement new procedures required under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), passed by Congress in 2002. But will these new voters have their day at the polls?

States were required to comply with two HAVA mandates by January 2004: provisional balloting and ID requirements for first-time voters registered by mail. However, reports by the Election Reform Information Project and the National Conference of State Legislatures show that implementation was slow in coming, leaving poll workers throughout the United States woefully under-trained to deal with the changes.

Add ongoing patterns of Republican secretaries of state disenfranchising voters to this mix, and you have a recipe for Election Day chaos.

While election irregularities in Florida received the lion's share of attention in 2000, voting problems, often concentrated in minority communities, plagued many states. In Chicago, for instance, 7 percent of votes cast

Trusts administers electionline.org, a nonpartisan Web site that analyzes and reports on election reform efforts. The site provides breaking news about election reforms around the country and a state-by-state breakdown of HAVA implementation.

Observing the polls

The following groups are organizing and deploying teams of poll monitors (also called poll watchers) to observe the election. For the first time international organizations will participate in these efforts.

► ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE (www.osce.org):

The OSCE is a 55-nation regional security organization that encourages member nations to monitor each other's elections, and has sent delegations to observe elections in Britain and France. The OSCE will send a delegation of 75 observers to monitor the U.S. presidential election in response to requests for international observation by a group of congressional leaders headed by

Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Texas). "We owe our efforts to improve upon our democracy not only to Americans but also to the rest of the

world," Johnson says. "The world looks to the United States as a role model for freedom and justice."

► GLOBAL EXCHANGE (www.fairelection.us):

Global Exchange, an international human rights organization based in San Francisco, is sponsoring Fair Election: International Election Observation 2004. The effort began September 14, when a 20-member delegation—including Horacio Boneo, an Argentine professor who is one of the United Nations' top advisors on elections, and Brigalia Bam, who chairs South Africa's Independent Electoral Commission—visited the United States to examine the state of voting procedures. During election week, an eight-person delegation will visit polling sites and conduct interviews with voters.

► ELECTION PROTECTION (www.electionprotection2004.org):

A coalition of groups led by People for the American Way, Election Protection 2004 is training and deploying 25,000 poll monitors throughout the United States. They are distributing "Voters' Bills of Rights" and staffing a toll-free number 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683) to answer registration and voting questions. Monitoring is focused in states where minority communities have been disproportionately disenfranchised in the past.

"What you're really talking about is credibility and acceptability," said Terence Humphreys, an election observer with Global Exchange. "What appears to have happened is that the 2000 elections were not acceptable to a large number of U.S. citizens. ... observation is one way to help make them more credible." ■

went uncounted due to ballot errors, and in minority precincts the percentage was as high as 17 percent. In the 2004 South Dakota primary, a different HAVA-induced problem surfaced: Native Americans were prevented from voting after they failed to provide photo IDs, a requirement not mandated by state or federal law.

Irregularities that result in spoiled ballots will mean everything in this close presidential race. Voters and poll workers need guidance on November 2, and several groups are gearing up to provide it.

Educating voters

The following groups are making voting rights information accessible to voters before they get to the polls.

► ACLU (www.aclu.org/vote):

The ACLU Voting Rights Project has produced voter empowerment cards for 12 states and will add other states up until the election. It also provides regular updates about efforts to protect the votes of minorities and ex-felons.

► PROJECT VOTE SMART (www.vote-smart.org):

Project Vote Smart's site provides links and contact information for all the states' boards of election, as well as voter registration requirements.

► LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS (www.lwv.org):

The League has long been respected for its nonpartisan voter guides. During this election, the League also produced a brochure, *5 Things You Need to Know on Election Day*.

► ELECTION REFORM INFORMATION PROJECT (<http://www.electionline.org/>):

This project of the University of Richmond and The Pew Charitable



I Think He Can, I Think He Can

JOHNN KERRY IS GOING TO WIN.
Repeat after me: John Kerry is going to win.

Normally I'm not one for mantras and affirmations, but to beat George W. Bush we all better start saying—out loud, to our neighbors, on the train, at the water cooler, anywhere a swing voter might be in earshot—that our guy (and, like it or not, he's our guy) is going to be the next president. So one more time: *John Kerry is going to win.*

How can he win? Looking at the record of the dangerous, disingenuous Bush administration, the question should be how could Kerry possibly lose? Yet all the hangdog Democrats and their pathologically pessimistic fellow-travelers ignore the encouraging evidence and just assume that one way or another—by hook, crook or October Surprise—the omnipotent Karl Rove will spank us again. The Republicans aren't afflicted with this “genetic predisposition to panic,” as Ken Auletta calls it, and maybe that's why they roll over us every time.

For a change, let's try to accentuate the positive. Sure, Kerry can be ponderous, pandering and mealy-mouthed. But in the three debates he looked more competent, confident and presidential than his opponent. Bush appeared intermittently incoherent and desperate, code-talking about “activist judges” and the *Dred Scott* decision in a bizarre shout-out to anti-choice zealots. At other times, Bush seemed to be channeling the ghost of Lee Atwater, with all the snide comments about Ted Kennedy and efforts to tag Kerry as a scary *liberal*. That's so 1988. What's next—Willie Horton in a swift boat?

While most of the national polls rate the race a dead heat, the trends favor Kerry. He trounces Bush on a wide range of domestic issues, according to the latest Gallup survey, which shows voters overwhelmingly prefer Kerry when it comes to the environment, healthcare, Social Security and education. Polls still show Bush maintaining a sizable advantage on the war on terror in spite of the tragedy in Iraq. But fewer Americans than ever believe the war was worth it, and the president's overall approval rating is sinking lower every day.

More bad news for Bush is what poll-watchers call the 50 percent rule. “The percentage of the vote an incumbent president receives in surveys is an extraordinarily accurate predictor of the percentage he will receive on Election Day,” Guy Molyneux recently explained in *The American Prospect*. “An incumbent who fails to poll above 50 percent is in grave jeopardy of losing his job.” Bush's average support in trial heats since the first debate is 47 percent.

The upside for Kerry is that the polls are almost certainly overestimating Bush's popularity by surveying older, whiter, Republican-leaning voters. One key demographic that's definitely being ignored is young people, millions of whom aren't polled because they only have cell phones. Young voters—whose turnout could be the highest since 1992—favored Kerry by as many as 25 points in recent Zogby polls.

Of course, no group of voters will be more important to Kerry's victory, especially in the battlegrounds, than African-Americans. While Kerry has been criticized for not doing enough to reach out to black voters, beating Bush may be motivation enough in places like Florida's Duval County—where 27,000 ballots, mostly from black neighborhoods, were tossed out in 2000.

A percentage point or two in places like Duval—where black voter registrations are up more than 150 percent—could tip the entire state.

One thing Kerry won't have to worry about in Florida this year is the Nader factor. Ralph may be on the ballot again this year, but almost everyone who endorsed him in 2000—the Greens, Barbara Ehrenreich, Michael Moore—has disowned him. The only person I've met who's even considering a vote for Nader is a born-again Christian Republican who can't stomach the war. The Libertarian candidate will get more votes.

County election boards in swing states—and many others—are adding staff, working overtime and reporting a rush in new voter registrations. Florida has at least a million new registered voters, the vast majority of whom are Democrats or independents. Registrations in Ohio's Democratic strongholds are up 250 percent, according to the *New York Times*. Philadelphia reported the greatest surge in voter registrations in two decades.

These figures are a direct result of the college kids, union workers, corporate lawyers and housewives—many of whom had never worked on a national political campaign before—getting on buses every weekend to go knock on doors in swing states. Hardened organizers and armchair activists alike are giving up their nights and taking time off from their day jobs to defeat George Bush. The pollsters all missed the same type of below-the-radar activity by the right in elections like 1980 and 1994. But this time the passion and energy is on our side.

I can't promise this will be one of those watershed elections, but it could be. John Kerry is going to win. And that's when the real work starts. ■

Young voters—whose turnout could be the highest since 1992—favored Kerry by as many as 25 points in recent Zogby polls.

CRAIG AARON is a senior editor at *In These Times* and an investigative reporter for *Public Citizen's Congress Watch*. The views expressed are his own.



Race to the Bottom

Kerry is all about hunting and KILLING terrorists. But will he torture them? Will he rip off their heads and shit down their necks? I just don't think he's sincere.

SOME REAL-TIME REACTION FROM THE DEBATES, swiped from my full-time gig as Wonkette. Let's start with the "Squabble in the Gables," now thoroughly masticated by the mainstream press.

Gee, *that* was incredibly predictable. Except for that part when Bush called Kerry a "good dad." As you know, Kerry eats babies. Kerry managed to not contradict himself within the space of a single sentence.

Bush succumbed to vapor lock a couple of times but everyone knows that just makes him seem like a normal guy. If Bush was listening to some kind of radio signal, it was between stations.

Cleveland, Ohio

9:10 Cheney: "I have not suggested there's a connection between Iraq and 9/11." Yes! And watch these monkeys fly out of my ass!

9:23 Bush-Cheney's global test: You must be able to beat up Howard Dean. Dean poses a terrorist threat. We're pretty sure we saw him trying to set his shoes on fire during Letterman last night.

10:07 Gwen is really into asking if Dick or John feels "personally attacked." Is this a debate or an encounter group? How's she going to end this thing? "OK guys . . . HUG!"

10:14 "I have not heard those numbers with respect to African-American women," says Cheney: See, we don't pay that much attention to African-American women in this administration. . . . I mean, we have Condoleezza!

POSTSCRIPT Dick Cheney said "factcheck.com" not "factcheck.org" and —ha! ha!—factcheck.com was briefly changed after the debate to point to George Soros's site. Oh, God. We're dying. It's like . . . wait, wait: There's a word for it! *Irony*. And, what's the word for the vice president telling a bald-faced lie that's cost the lives of more than 1,000 Americans and thousands of Iraqis?

St. Louis, Missouri

9:03 Kerry pats Bush on the back! Checking for that wire...

9:09 Is it just me, or does Bush get more drawly when he's talking to, uhm, "a whole bunch of folks"?

9:14 Global test! Global test! Global test! Bush is so psyched. He's going to start jumping up and down and clapping his hands if someone asks about "frivolous lawsuits."

9:27 Bush is grinding his teeth into stumps. Oh, fuck: "That answer almost made me want to scowl." . . . Uhm. Yeah. I mean, that joke *bombed*. Bombed like a bad war.

9:39 The voice in his ear just told him to speak more quietly.

9:47 Kerry is the first presidential candidate in history to go out of his way to *remind* people he's a lawyer.

9:49 Bush just called Kerry "Kennedy." He wishes. (Both of them.)

10:10 Did the President of the United States really just ask Charlie Gibson if he "needed wood"? Where's Bob Dole when you need him?

10:21 Ha! Bush said he'd choose judges based on whether or not they'd vote for him! Ha! Ha! Funny because it's *true*.

10:30 Dad writes in with his summation: "Kerry waxed Bush's ass." And you wonder how I turned out this way.

Tempe, Arizona

9:09 Kerry is all about hunting and KILLING terrorists. But will he torture them? Will he rip off their heads and shit down their necks? I just don't think he's sincere.

9:11 Awesome: The President hasn't gotten a flu shot...because of frivolous lawsuits.

9:12 "A plan is not a litany of complaints." No, a plan is a series *oversimplified slogans and focus-grouped sound-bites!*

9:39 Schieffer says that Kerry has a "massive plan." Yes . . . you can tell by the size of his hands.

10:00 No Child Left Behind is really a jobs act, says Bush. Of course. And Social Security is really a missile defense program. And Federal Highways funding? Actually a part of the Metric Conversion Office. And clean coal legislation helps you make soup.

10:17 Bush can "feel" when people pray for him. It's like frottage.

10:25 Bush: "I love the strong women around me." As many as possible. As long as possible.

Well, that was exciting—now, all that's left is to see who wins the *New York Press*' Quadrennial Election Hack Invitational, a search for America's worst campaign journalist.

Oh, yeah, and that thing we meant to do on November 2. ■

ANA MARIE COX is the editor of *Wonkette!* (www.wonkette.com) and writes for a variety of publications on culture, politics and conservatives' foibles.



Cornel West: Public Intellectual

CORNEL WEST MAY BE AMERICA'S BEST-KNOWN public intellectual. He's a professor of religion at Princeton University, where he has taught since a very public exit from Harvard in 2002. He is the author and co-author of several books, including *Democracy Matters*, his most recent, which is a sequel to his 1993 *Race Matters*, which won the American Book Award.

It's not likely that West's book would change the mind of anyone already committed to the reelection of President George W. Bush. But its appearance at this time provides yet another indictment of the administration's foreign and domestic policies. West argues that American democracy is being distorted in the Bush era by three dominating dogmas: free-market fundamentalism, aggressive militarism and escalating authoritarianism.

Although many of his works are aimed at popular audience, West has published a host of scholarly texts, including *Prophetic Fragments*, *The American Evasion of Philosophy* and *Post-Analytic Philosophy*. While he is a prolific academic, that's not the reason for his wide appeal. He's appeared in two of the three Matrix films and created two spoken-word CDs: *Sketches of My Culture* and the two-CD set *Street Knowledge*. West's Harvard classes were so popular, he sometimes had to take them off campus to find a large enough venue.

Students, just like audiences at his public performances, no doubt are dazzled by West's torrents of words and thematic virtuosity. He crosses boundaries of discipline and genre to link disparate notions, dropping names and eccentric references as he riffs.

During a West performance, you're likely to hear names like Søren Kierkegaard and KRS-One mentioned in the same sentence. I wouldn't be surprised if he found some way to link jazz saxophonist John Coltrane's "Naima" solo to some forgotten rhetorical flourish of Benjamin Franklin or to some passage in a novel by Ralph Waldo Emerson or James Baldwin. West regularly limns Western cultural history for unlikely juxtapositions. No allusion is too far-flung.

In *Democracy Matters*, for example, West cites characters in Plato's *Republic* and Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* to illustrate some of "deadening nihilisms" he says are suffocating the "deep democratic energies" in America today. He goes to the novels of Herman Melville for what he calls "an unprecedented and unmatched meditation on the imperialist and racist impediments to democracy in American life."

West also believes the musical genre of the blues is a philosophical lodestone for successful democracy. The blues aesthetic placed stress "on dialogue, resistance and hope," which, he writes, "is the very lifeblood for a vital democratic citizenry." For West, novelist Toni Morrison's "magisterial corpus" best exemplifies this blues aesthetic.

"Morrison's fundamental democratic insight," he writes, "is that there can be democratic dialogue only when one is open to the humanity of individuals and to the intensity of their personalities."

Democracy Matters also includes a very well-argued chapter on the conflict in the Middle East and the overarching problem of Muslims and Jews. He makes common cause with progressive Jews as he excoriates the policies of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. He urges a more complex understanding of Islam, but forthrightly condemns "Islamic fundamentalist gangsters" and "the anti-Semitism of autocratic Islamic states."

Critics often cite his wide-ranging concerns as proof of their charge he is miles wide and inches deep, favoring style over substance. And, to be frank, West gives these critics plenty of ammunition.

There is something excessive about him. He chronically overdresses. He is verbose, occasionally even grandiloquent. His histrionic oratorical style sometimes distracts from his message. At times his eclectic "multi-contextualism" periodically veers into a maze of incoherence. That seeming incoherence is what prompted the dust-up between him and Lawrence H. Summers, then the newly installed president of Harvard.

Although West authored more than 10 books and is heavily cited in scholarly references, Summers questioned his commitment to Harvard-caliber scholarship. At the time West was a part of Harvard's vaunted dream team of Black Studies stars, assembled by Henry Louis Gates Jr. Summers' behavior insulted West and he bounced to Princeton, where he had taught before joining Gates' team.

"Weaving a web of interconnections between the academy, mass media, prisons, churches and the streets . . . did not fit into the narrow field of his technocratic vision," he writes explaining his exit.

Those interconnections are laudable and make him the very definition of a public intellectual. But sometimes those connections get clogged: This imaginative aesthetic can render him politically inconsequential—as in 2000 when he backed Ralph Nader over Al Gore.

But that obdurate romanticism just might be the price we have to pay for West's manifest brilliance. ■

Democracy Matters provides yet another indictment of the administration's foreign and domestic policies.

SALIM MUWAKKIL is a senior editor at *In These Times*, a contributing columnist to the *Chicago Tribune* and a *Crime and Communities Media Fellow* of the *Open Society Institute*.



The First Stone *By Joel Bleifuss*

Nader dismissed his former supporters as 'scared liberals' who were suffering 'a total loss of nerve.'



On Second Thought

FOUR YEARS AGO, RALPH Nader persuaded 113 prominent citizens, many of them his political friends, to join the Nader 2000 Citizen's Committee and endorse his presidential bid. This year several people on that committee, principally John Stauber, Barbara Ehrenreich, Jeff Cohen and Robert McChesney, have asked their fellow committee members to endorse a statement that reads in part:

We urge support for Kerry/Edwards in all "swing states," even while we strongly disagree with Kerry's policies on Iraq and other issues. For people seeking progressive social change in the United States, removing George W. Bush from office should be the top priority in the 2004 presidential election. Progressive votes for John Kerry in swing states may prove decisive in attaining this vital goal.

In all, 75 of the original 113

committee members signed on, including David Barsamian, John Cavanagh, Noam Chomsky, Steve Cobble, Ben Cohen, Peter Coyote, Phil Donahue, Barbara Dudley, Richard Falk, Jim Hightower, Saul Landau, Michael Lerner, Peter Montague, Ruth Ozeki, Francis Fox Piven, Bonnie Raitt, Tim Robbins, Susan Sarandon, Michelle Shocked, Studs Terkel, Tom Tomorrow, Eddie Vedder, Cornel West and Howard Zinn.

For his part, Nader dismissed his former supporters as "scared liberals" who were suffering "a total loss of nerve."

A year ago, Stauber, co-author of *Banana Republicans*, asked Nader to forego another run, support the Democratic nominee and lead a movement to defeat Bush. According to Stauber, Nader responded: "If I did that, they would ignore me. I would get no attention."

Spoiled rotten

As polls in swing states show, if Nader were not in the race, John Kerry would have a much better chance of being elected president.

It appears possible that once again Nader could attract enough voters to make the reelection of George W. Bush a reality. Damn spoilers.

"Damn right," says the Nader campaign. The Nader-Camejo 2004 Web site issues the following invitation: "Revolutionaries always spoil corrupt systems. Join the spoiler revolution. ... The Nader/Camejo campaign is more than happy to spoil two-party control of our government. We also hope to spoil political, social and economic injustice at home and abroad." To do your part, send \$25 dollars to the campaign and Nader will send you a "Spoiler" T-shirt. So, wear it with pride, perhaps at the swearing in ceremony of Bush's first Supreme Court appointee.



**Supreme Court
Justice Antonin Scalia
loves a good orgy.**

Scalia disrobed

Here's the stuff of bad dreams. It seems that if Justice Antonin Scalia had his way, the next Supreme Court justice would be ultra conservative and ultra kinky. When questioned about his sexual morality during a talk at Harvard, Scalia, who supports anti-sodomy laws, said, "I even take the position that sexual orgies eliminate social tensions and ought to be encouraged."

Extend a helping hand

In an effort to inspire the forces of good, Michael Moore sent out a letter via his Web site (www.MichaelMoore.com), which reads in part:

All is not over. Far from it. The Bush people need you to believe that it is over. They need you to slump back in your easy chair and feel that sick pain in your gut as you contemplate another four years of George W. Bush. They need you to wish we had a candidate who didn't windsurf and who was just as smart as we were when we knew Bush was lying about WMD and Saddam planning 9/11. ... Buck up. The country is almost back in our hands. Not another negative word until November 3! Then you can bitch all you want about how you wish Kerry was still that long-haired kid who once had the courage to stand up for something. ... Instead of wailing and gnashing your teeth, why not hold out a hand to him and help the inner

soldier/protester come out and defeat the forces of evil we now so desperately face. Do we have any other choice?

Cheney tells a lie

During the vice presidential candidates debate in Cleveland, Dick Cheney told America that one of his duties as vice president is to preside over the Senate. Yet, he added, that night was the first time the two men had met. The implication: Edwards is an absentee senator. Traditionally the vice president presides over the Senate on Tuesdays. And Cheney's statement would have been disturbing were it not for the fact that of the 127 Tuesdays the Senate has been in session since Bush was inaugurated, Cheney has presided over just two—the same number, it turns out, as Edwards. What's more, Cheney and Edwards met in February 2001 at an inaugural prayer breakfast.

Powell tells the truth

When Vice President Dick Cheney told a rally in Iowa that if Kerry is elected "the danger is that we'll get hit again and we'll be hit in a way that will be devastating from the standpoint of the United States," Secretary of State Colin Powell came to Kerry's defense. When asked how he thought Kerry would respond to a terrorist attack, Powell said, "As commander in chief, I think he'd respond to it in a robust

way." Earlier that week it was reported that the BBC's James Naughtie was set to publish a book, *The Accidental American: Tony Blair and the Presidency*. In it, Naughtie writes of a phone conversation between Powell and British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, in which Powell described neoconservatives Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz as "fucking crazies."

Doing what is right

At least some people in the corporate media understand the dynamics of this presidential campaign. On October 8, ABC News Political Director Mark Halperin sent his staff the following memo:

The *New York Times* (Nagourney/Stevenson) and Howard Fineman on the web both make the same point today: the

current Bush attacks on Kerry involve distortions and taking things out of context in a way that goes beyond what Kerry has done. ... We have a responsibility to hold both sides accountable to the public interest, but that doesn't mean we reflexively and artificially hold both sides "equally" accountable when the facts don't warrant that. I'm sure many of you have this week felt the stepped up Bush efforts to complain about our coverage. This is all part of their efforts to get away with as much as possible with the stepped up, renewed efforts to win the election by destroying Senator Kerry at least partly through distortions. It's up to Kerry to defend himself, of course. But as one of the few news organizations with the skill and strength to help voters evaluate what the candidates are saying to serve the public interest, now is the time for all of us to step up and do that right. ■

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The Hollow Man

The debates revealed just how little Candidate Bush has to offer.

BY DAVID KUSNET



AFTER THE THIRD AND FINAL PRESIDENTIAL debate concluded with the candidates reciting their prepared closing statements, the television pundits repeated their equally predictable conclusion that the event was a draw, with Kerry ahead on “substance” but Bush besting him on “style.”

But soon afterward, the voters weighed in with a different decision, declaring Kerry the winner by margins ranging from 52 percent to 39 percent (CNN/USA Today) to 39 percent to 25 percent (CBS) and 42 percent to 41 percent (ABC News in a sampling heavily weighted to Republicans).

The people, not the pundits, had it right. Kerry won all three debates. Yes, he scored heavily on policy—a tribute not only to his forensic skills but also to the facts about the quagmire in Iraq and the jobless, raise-less economic recovery. But he also prevailed on personality—with his steady stoicism more reassuring in a post-9/11 world than the self-styled “wartime president’s” unsettling tendency to growls and giggles.

While the voters’ verdict on the three debates was varied, there’s no doubt about their impact on the presidential race. Bush began the debates 7 percentage points ahead of Kerry in most national polls. Two weeks later, after the third debate, Bush and Kerry were tied, with about half the voters saying they don’t want four more years of Bush—a perilous position for a president running for reelection.

The campaign turned from a blowout to a dead-heat because most voters seem to see the debates—and, perhaps, the presidential choice itself—through the lens of the first debate, where Kerry was confident and concise and Bush was frowning and frazzled.

But if any of the remaining undecided voters, especially worried working people, were watching the third debate, the Kodak moments came when Bush was asked questions about how the economy affects everyday Americans.

Early in the evening, moderator Bob Schiefer asked Bush, “What do you say to someone in this country who has lost his job to someone overseas who’s being paid a fraction of what that job paid here in the United States?”

Bush looked at Schiefer, not the camera, and answered: “I’d say, Bob, I’ve got policies to continue to grow our economy and create the jobs of the 21st Century. And here’s some help for you to get an education. Here’s help for you to go to a community college.” Then, Bush started singing the praises of No Child Left Behind, the program to improve the nation’s public schools, from kindergarten through high school.

Several questions later, Bush was asked whether he would raise the minimum wage. This time, he devoted two sentences to low-wage workers, then retreated to No Child Left Behind.

For voters anxious about losing good-paying jobs or already working for poverty wages, Bush’s message

was clearer than he knew: The problem, dummy, is you didn't get a good education. And while it's most likely too late for you, at least your kids just might have a future, if we shake up or shut down their schools.

Maybe Bush's just-folks manner still makes him personally likeable, but the third debate went a long way toward sealing the impression that he's a regular guy who's out of touch with regular people. After all, he's been president for four years, but on the night when his presidency hung in the balance, he couldn't speak for 90 seconds about the problems of mature workers who are afraid their jobs will be shipped overseas, leaving them working for Wal-Mart wages.

Bush's failure to fill his allotted time with credible discussions of economic issues spoke volumes about his handicaps as a debater, as a candidate, and, ultimately, as a president. Before the debates began, pundits and partisans alike agreed that Bush and Kerry had contrasting problems. Bush's challenge was to collect and commit to memory enough plausible points about the country's condition to fill his half of a 90-minute debate. Kerry's problem was distilling what he wanted to say, so that he could complete his answers before the red lights went on.

Never before (including in Gerald Ford's and Ronald Reagan's reelection campaigns) had a sitting president faced such low expectations, nor had a challenger ever had it taken for granted that he had a greater command of the facts about foreign and domestic issues, facing only the obstacle that he had too many ideas to cram into 90-second responses.

Indeed, Bush's advantages were believed to be his friendlier, more accessible personality and his ability to sum up his positions in simple statements of principle. In 2000, he held a more knowledgeable but less likeable Al Gore to a draw in their debates, and, this time, many pundits and political insiders thought the aura of the presidency would give him an added advantage over the patrician and professorial Kerry.

Except for the second debate where the town hall format allowed Bush to banter with the audience, Kerry was the winner on style as well as substance. Towering over Bush, looking straight into the camera, speaking in a strong and steady voice, and rarely fretful or frustrated, Kerry looked and sounded more like a president than the incumbent. He certainly seemed nothing like the "flip-flopper" who had been regularly lambasted by Bush's stump speeches and the Republican convention oratory and branded "unfit

for command" by attack ads on TV and a poison-pen paperback in the bookstores.

While Kerry, unlike his running mate John Edwards, is hardly populist in manner, he has honed an attack on Bush's economic policies for catering to special interests, from the top-bracket tax cuts to the ban on importing inexpensive prescription drugs from Canada. And Kerry offered ideas to address the anxieties of middle-class Americans, from securing their health coverage to abolishing the tax incentives that send their jobs abroad.

Meanwhile, by the third debate, Bush had lost his last remaining advantage—an emotional intelligence that allowed him

calling their opponents "liberals," and, in Kerry's case, a "Massachusetts liberal" at that. But Kerry has taken pains to present himself in ways that transcend the stereotypes that skewered Michael Dukakis and Edward Kennedy. Unlike his predecessors and presumed soul mates, Kerry is a war hero, a former prosecutor, an aviator and, he reminded Americans in the final debate, an avid hunter as well.

Moreover, the issues in this campaign are different from those of 16 years ago, when the elder Bush branded Dukakis with the dreaded L-word. When the younger Bush bashes Kerry for wanting to spend more money on public education and homeland

Bush's failure to fill his allotted time with credible discussions of economic issues spoke volumes about his handicaps as a debater, as a candidate, and, ultimately, as a president.

to bond with Americans, even though he rarely addressed them articulately without a prepared text—the great exception being his bullhorn-wielding pledge to the firefighters and ironworkers near Ground Zero: "The people who knocked down those buildings are going to hear from all of us soon." Except when asked about faith and family, that Bush didn't show up at the first or third debates. Instead, he smiled at things that weren't happy, laughed at things that weren't funny and seemed less like a commander-in-chief than an unprepared high school kid suddenly called upon in class.

In the remaining days of the campaign, Bush and his backers are left with the last-ditch tactic of embattled Republicans:

security, Kerry cheerfully pleads guilty, knowing that these charges carry none of the emotional impact of calling Dukakis soft on crime and spendthrift on welfare.

Four years ago, Bush won, sort of, by being more likeable at a time when it seemed the presidency might not be much more difficult than being governor of Texas. This time, Kerry can prevail with voters looking for *gravitas*, not geniality. Republican oratory notwithstanding, Bush, not Kerry, may be the candidate whose rationale was reduced to rubble on September 11, 2001. ■

DAVID KUSNET was chief speechwriter for former President Bill Clinton from 1992 through 1994. He is author of *Speaking American: How the Democrats Can Win in the Nineties*.



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RUNNING A MEDIA DEFICIT

The joint rise of the conservative media and creeping authoritarianism is no coincidence.

BY ROBERT PARRY

THE TERRORIST ATTACKS ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, MAY have ignited the fire that has driven the United States in the direction of a more authoritarian system. But the kindling was put in place over three decades.

The conservatives who set the United States off in this political direction in the '70s had no idea where the journey would end. Their original thinking was more defensive than offensive. The elder George Bush started out as a kind of Mr. Fix-it with gold-plated connections in both the Eastern Establishment and the Texas Oil World. He knew how to defuse a scandal and hide the incriminating evidence. He worked diligently, though ultimately unsuccessfully, to protect Richard Nixon from Watergate. He was more successful in getting the CIA off the front pages for Gerald Ford in 1976. Bush's cover-up skills enhanced his own power during the Reagan-Bush era of 1981 to 1993 and saved the family name so his sons could build their own political careers.

In the '90s, the younger George Bush entered a political world where the conservatives were already in the ascendancy and the liberals were on the run. His contribution was an intuitive grasp of how hardball Republican strategies, aggressive conservative news outlets and mystical Christian fundamentalism could blend into a potent political coalition and consolidate the Right's dominance of U.S. government power.

Indeed, Bush picked up useful lessons during his father's 1988 presidential campaign against Michael Dukakis. Doug Wead taught Bush how to signal to the Christian fundamentalists. Lee Atwater passed on the tricks for turning a decent opponent into a national laughingstock.

Some liberal activists wonder why Democratic leaders are often so circumspect. Why, they ask, don't the Democrats just let it fly like the Republicans do? The cautious tone turns off much of the Democratic base while leaving many independent voters questioning whether the Democrats really know what they stand for.

The Democratic-defensive dynamic, however, is a consequence of the media-political infrastructure that Republicans and conservatives have spent three decades—and billions of dollars—creating. This conservative infrastructure has helped the Republicans achieve a unity that often has been lacking on the Democratic side. Conservatives can consult dozens of well-financed media outlets to hear the latest pro-Republican "themes," often coordinated with the Republican National Committee or Bush's White House.

Liberals lack any comparable media apparatus, having failed to match the investment and dedication of the right. Those committed

liberal outlets that do exist are almost always underfunded and often part-time. The Republicans' right-wing media has given them a powerful advantage—and one that does not seem likely to go away.

This media deficit puts the Bush critics at a particular disadvantage because their arguments require explanation of historical context and acceptance of the frustrating work of diplomacy. On the other hand, Bush's argument is easier to grasp: Kill the bad guys.

In the 2000 election, Bush's simple, easygoing style, which conceals a fierce competitiveness, made Bush a sellable commodity to the American people (especially to white men), a darling of the conservative news media and a favorite of many mainstream journalists.

Add the fear and the sense of victimization from the 9/11 attacks and a new political model suddenly lay open as a possibility for the United States. It would be a post-modern authoritarian system that would rely less on traditional repression of political opponents than on a sophisticated media operation to intimidate and marginalize dissidents.

The new system would be the sum of the parts gradually arising out of the ruins of Watergate. At its core would be the intelligence concept of "perception management" not so much Orwellian as post-Orwellian. While Orwell's 1984 envisioned sophisticated torture to extract confessions and mass speeches to stir up ethnic hatreds, this new system would rely on ridicule to make those who get in the way objects of derision, outcasts whose very names draw eye-rolling chuckles and knee-slapping guffaws. Think of Dukakis wearing a helmet, Bill Clinton and a semen-stained dress and Al Gore inventing the Internet, not to mention any number of lesser-known public figures who were so foolish as to object to the rush to war in Iraq.

George W. Bush was the perfect candidate for exploiting this transformation. Lacking a deep appreciation for the American constitutional system of checks and balances, Bush wasn't personally repulsed by the notion of shifting to a more authoritarian structure of governance and silencing meaningful dissent. Indeed, he was attracted to the idea.

After claiming the presidency in December 2000, Bush once joked, "If this were a dictatorship, it would be a heck of a lot easier—so long as I'm the dictator." It is hard to imagine that any other American president would have said such a thing. ■

ROBERT PARRY is the author of *Secrecy & Privilege: Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq* (www.secrecyandprivilege.com), from which this article was adapted.



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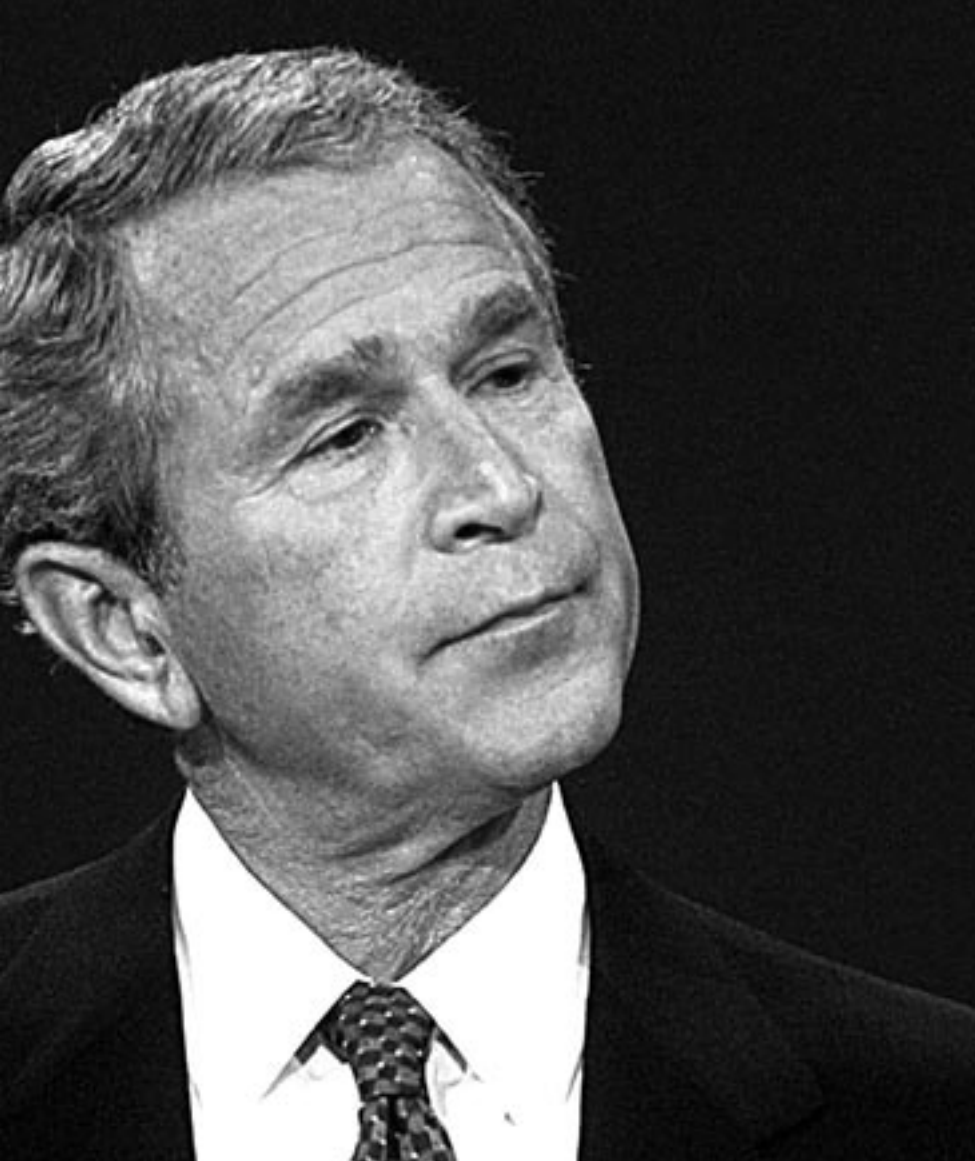
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A PATTERN OF FAILURE

THE BUSH RECORD



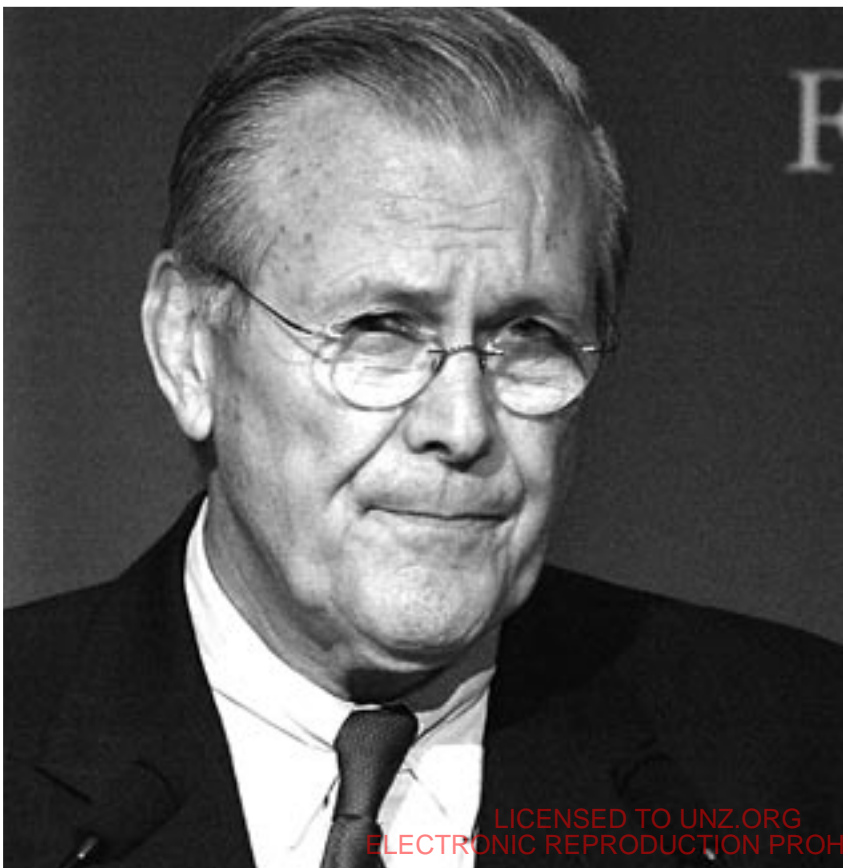


FOUR YEARS AGO A politicized Supreme Court undermined the Constitution by implanting George W. Bush in the White House. Although that act hinted at the level of respect this president and his associates had for our nation's democratic institutions, few grasped the full meaning of what the second coming of a Bush would mean.

How could we?

In every area of public policy—unless one includes consolidating power and privilege for the corporate class—this administration has failed. It dirtied the air and polluted civil society. It told us to fear then made us less safe. It lauded freedom but delivered an empire.

During this campaign there have been a lot of false statements made about the state of our nation. On the following pages *In These Times* chronicles Bush's four-year assault on America through essays, a timeline and lists of his greatest hits. Use this guide to educate yourself, your family, your friends, your neighbors and your colleagues. Then encourage them to vote. »





Bush's War Against the Military

By Ian Williams

GEORGE W. BUSH SO OFTEN INVOKES his nominal title of “commander in chief” at veterans’ rallies, on military bases and during presidential debates that he now appears like some latter-day *caudillo*. But his claims to be a commander of any kind in any serious way are a figment of his imagination.

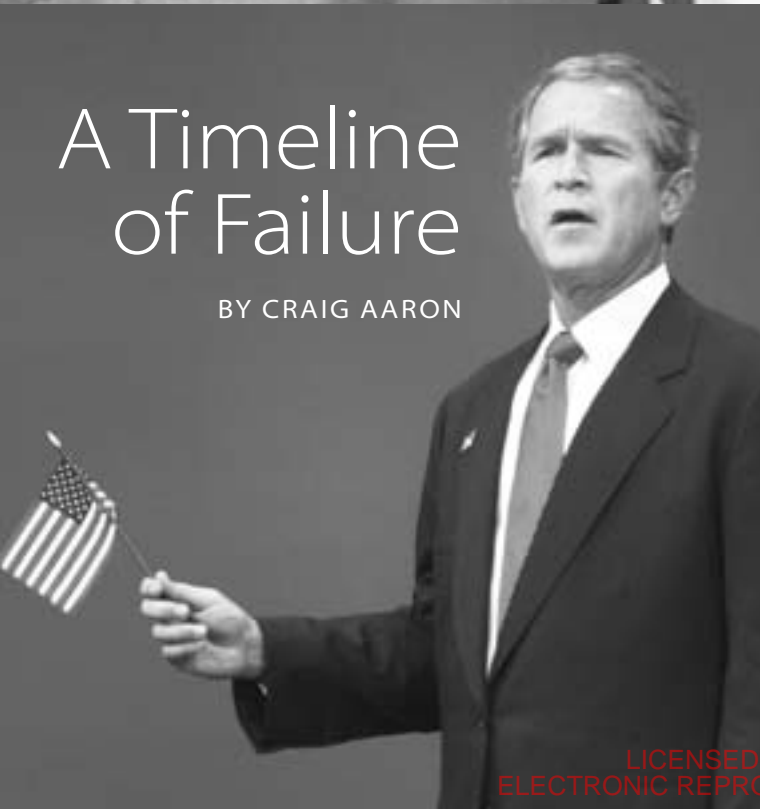
Discounting that he sent American troops into Iraq on false pretenses, a real commander would fight for the welfare of his troops. But Bush has demonstrated a consistent unwillingness to do so, and as a result many high-ranking officers have endorsed Kerry, including retired Navy Adm. William Crowe and former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Army Gen. John Shalikashvili.

Bush has failed the military on almost every level. While Halliburton and Boeing went to the bank this year with about \$10 billion each, undermanned U.S. forces went into Iraq without armored vests and driving unarmored vehicles. The fatal results were hidden from public view as the dead were secreted home and the Department of Defense (DOD) obscured and juggled the numbers of maimed and wounded.

Once back in the United States, veterans found no federal welcome mat laid out for them. By April this year, one in six veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan had filed benefits claims with the Veterans Administration for service-related disabilities. These figures do not include those troops still serving and are twice the number the DOD Web site says suffered “Non-Mortal

A Timeline of Failure

BY CRAIG AARON



JANUARY 2001

- 20** On the day of George W. Bush’s inauguration, Chief of Staff Andrew Card issues a 60-day moratorium halting all new health, safety and environmental regulations issued in the final days of the Clinton administration.
- 23** On the 28th anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision, Bush reinstates the global gag rule barring U.S. funding for abortion counseling abroad.

FEBRUARY 2001

- 5** Bush suspends Clinton’s “roadless rule” protecting nearly 60 million acres of forests from logging and road-building.
- 17** Bush signs four anti-union executive orders, including measures to prohibit “project labor agreements” at federal construction sites and to remove job protections for union employees whose companies lose federal contracts.
- 26** Senate Republicans introduce a bill to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil exploration.

Wounds" in those conflicts. Today, one-third of those claims, almost 10,000, have yet to be processed. Further, Bush's 2005 budget will cut 540 staff members of the Veterans Benefit Administration, which is the office that handles the claims. The outreach department that lets vets know of available services also was instructed in a 2002 memo by a deputy undersecretary in the Veterans Health Administration to run in silent mode to flush out people who had not made claims out of ignorance.

Even if the war wounded succeed in getting disability pay, in 2003 Bush threatened to veto a bill that allowed veterans to collect disability pay and pensions simultaneously.

In 2003, his administration also tried to cut combat pay from \$225 to \$150 a month and the family separation allowance from \$250 to \$100. And most callously of all, the frat brat who ducked a war that killed 48,000 American troops threatened to veto a proposal to double the \$6,000 payment to relatives of soldiers killed in action.

That is typical of the way in which President Bush, who loves to dress up in uniform, treats those who actually wear one. As a June 30, 2003, *Army Times* editorial concluded: "President Bush and the Republican-controlled Congress have missed no opportunity to heap richly deserved praise on the military. But talk is cheap and getting cheaper by the day, judging by the nickel-and-dime treatment the troops are getting lately."

In his ghostwritten 1999 biography *A Charge to Keep*, an indignant Bush wrote:

"Nearly twelve thousand members of the armed forces are on food stamps. I support increased pay and better benefits and training for our citizen soldiers. A volunteer military has only two paths. It can lower its standards to fill its ranks. Or it can inspire the best and brightest to join and stay." Despite four years to do something about it, more than 250,000 military families did not get Bush's much-vaunted child tax

You would think that the Bush administration would be solicitous of the foot soldiers who carry out its imperial ambitions. But this administration is militaristic, not pro-military. Most of its members sedulously avoided combat and uniformed service of any kind in previous wars and most current enlisted personnel come from small town, blue-collar America, precisely the people whose voices are among the least heard. It is no surprise

The frat brat who ducked a war that killed 48,000 American troops threatened to veto a proposal to double the \$6,000 payment to relatives of soldiers killed in action.

credit because their breadwinner earned less than \$26,000 a year. And in his 2005 budget, Bush proposes only that combat pay not count toward eligibility for food stamps—for which no less than 25,000 military families are eligible.

The U.S. Army pay scale is about half that of the British, which is why there is a major crisis in military recruitment. Senior officers talk about a "serious crisis" in recruitment for the regular forces. In addition, the Iraq war has put heavy demands on reservists and guard units. For the first time in 10 years, the guard failed to meet its recruitment target. In one Indiana unit, for instance, the reenlistment rate has dropped from 85 percent to 32 percent.

that Labor Secretary Elaine Chao's proposals for cutting back legal entitlement to overtime pay this year included all those who had learned their skill in the military.

All of this penny-pinching may seem strange in light of Bush's desperate attempts to associate himself with the military. But when he dons a flak jacket, the president is not looking to win over those GIs who have just had their term extended on stop-loss orders, but those TV-viewing voters who put the military on a pedestal as the guarantor of American virtues. ■

IAN WILLIAMS' latest book is *Deserter: Bush's War on Military Families, Veterans and His Own Past*, available from Nation Books.

MARCH 2001

- 7** At the urging of President Bush, Congress repeals ergonomic regulations designed to protect workers from repetitive-stress injuries.
- 9** Bush issues an executive order to prevent mechanics at Northwest Airlines from going on strike.
- 14** Bush abandons his campaign pledge to regulate carbon dioxide emissions from power plants.
- 20** Bush administration moves to overturn a Clinton regulation reducing the allowable level of arsenic in drinking water.
- 28** Bush backs out of Kyoto treaty on global warming.

APRIL 2001

- 11** Bush administration abandons international effort to crack down on offshore tax havens.
- 16** Vice President Dick Cheney's task force releases its National Energy Policy report, calling for weaker environmental regulations and massive subsidies for the oil and gas, coal and nuclear power industries.
- 26** Congress passes \$1.35 trillion tax cut.
- 29** Bush meets with California Gov. Gray Davis but refuses to impose federal price controls to curtail California's energy crisis.

JUNE 2001

- 19** Cheney refuses to release records of energy task force meetings to the General Accounting Office.
- 21** Bush threatens to veto McCain-Kennedy patients' bill of rights legislation.
- 28** Attorney General John Ashcroft announces a policy that would require gun records be destroyed one day after a background check rather than 90 days later.



Foreign Policy *By Karen Kwiatkowski*

Thomas Paine once wrote, "We can only reason from what is; we can reason on actualities, but not on possibilities." From the beginning, the Bush team's foreign policy disregarded reality and ignored actuality. As a result, President Bush has spent four years delivering a nightmarishly costly and dangerous foreign policy. Taxpayers and American families already have paid dearly for the Bush-Cheney Washington excursion, and they will continue to pay long after Bush returns to Crawford, Texas.

1 Scuttling the nascent effort to build peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Israel has had no real Palestinian negotiating partner for some time. America stands alone as a country that can influence Israel's behavior while maintaining the region-wide credibility required to create a Palestinian political capability. Instead, Bush has provided what Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's senior advisor Dov Weinglass calls "formaldehyde" for any political process with the Palestinians. Only America, only in the post-Cold War period, and, as with Nixon and China, only a Republican president could make real political progress on this single, overwhelming issue that enervates and fuels global anti-American Islamic militancy. Instead, Bush took an immediate, costly and criminal pass on this dire responsibility of American leadership.



2 Squandering post-9/11 international unity and good will toward America to pursue the neo-conservative invasion and occupation of Iraq.

This Bush-neoconservative operation might have worked, but his administration's blatant never-ending dishonesty and purposeful lack of planning for real on-the-ground progress in Iraq trumped his Baghdad bait and switch. More than 20 reasons were put forth by the administration for the invasion of Iraq. Most were false and none made national security sense. The whole world reaps the whirlwind for this Bush disaster, symbolized by the Orwell-meets-corporate raider mandate he calls "pre-emptive defense."

3 Suspending deliberation, debate and progress on three very real threats to American security—global nuclear proliferation, politicized intelligence and the real nature of our non-state enemies.

Bush invaded two countries with no

nuclear or WMD capability while ignoring or even allying with far more dangerous nuclear regimes. He happily slurped the Kool-Aid of intelligence produced by a spastic Cold War intelligence machine and filtered through neoconservative ideologues. He energetically quadrupled the global geographical and political operating space for anti-American terrorism. It will take the full attention of several future White House administrations and money we don't have to overcome the effect of George W. Bush's brand of patriotism and his understanding of "evil" terrorists.

4 Selling our children's future through debt and deficit spending.

To conduct wasteful wars of empire, and keep a fat Congress supportive of your plans, money must be spent by the billions and trillions. Instead of improving American productivity, Bush gave token tax rebates to workers that were consumed the month they were received by swell-

ing food, housing, fuel and medical costs, while his elite business cronies figured out how to enjoy their massive tax cut and get more access to no-contest government contracts. While in part a domestic mistake, it cuts to the heart of national security. When Chinese and European investors call in these T-bills, and the neo-American empire falls apart, George W. Bush will be happily retired and not returning calls.

5 Shattering political trust and historical ties to our oldest allies in Europe, without building or strengthening alternative relationships with any other part of the world.

It is not only Europe that is forging ahead without America as a trusted partner, but the rest of the world as well. Colin Powell's potential as Secretary of State was continually shredded by the neoconservative designers of the "real" Bush foreign policy. Bush not only stood by while non-elected ideologues campaigned for their agenda within shadowy corridors, he enthusiastically led the way in undercutting America's global standing and influence. ■

KAREN KWIATKOWSKI is a retired USAF lieutenant colonel, who spent four years working at the Pentagon. She is now an adjunct faculty member at James Madison University.

JULY 2001

- 9 Bush administration opposes U.N. treaty to curb international trafficking in small arms and light weapons.
- 26 Bush administration rejects international treaty on germ warfare and biological weapons.

AUGUST 2001

- 6 Presidential Daily Briefing warns "Bin Ladin [sic] Determined to Strike in U.S."
- 9 Bush limits stem cell research to "existing lines."


SEPTEMBER 2001

- 6 Justice Department drops effort to break up Microsoft, hoping to speed settlement of antitrust lawsuit.
- 11 Terrorists crash hijacked airliners into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, killing thousands.
- 22 Bush signs \$15 billion airline bailout.

OCTOBER 2001

- 26 Bush signs the USA PATRIOT Act.
- 29 Justice Department acknowledges but won't identify more than 1,000 individuals, mostly immigrants, detained since September 11 attacks.
- 31 Ashcroft authorizes monitoring of attorney-client conversations in terrorism investigations.





In these insecure times, Democratic women voters supposedly are drifting toward George W. Bush. I'll believe it when I see it. But just in case, perhaps it's time for a reality check.

After all, this is not your daddy's backlash. »

Reality Check

From ending the Equal Pay Initiative to championing the Partial Birth Abortion Act, Bush's record speaks for itself. *By Laura Flanders*

NOVEMBER 2001

- 1** Bush issues executive order blocking the release of presidential records.
- 13** Bush orders that "enemy combatants" be tried in military tribunals.
- 14** Justice Department issues regulations allowing illegal immigrants to be detained indefinitely if their release could pose "serious adverse foreign-policy consequences."

DECEMBER 2001

- 11** White House commission recommends privatizing Social Security.
- 12** Bush informs congressional leaders that he intends to pull out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty unilaterally.

- 18** Congress passes \$26.4 billion No Child Left Behind Act.
- 27** Bush repeals "responsible contractor rule" that had required scrutiny of safety and environmental law violations in the awarding of federal contracts.

JANUARY 2002

- 11** First Afghan prisoners arrive at "Camp X-Ray" in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba; Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld declares them "unlawful combatants" with no rights under the Geneva Convention.
- 16** Cheney refuses to provide details of his multiple meetings with Enron officials.



14 White House unveils its Clear Skies initiative calling for voluntary reductions of three major pollutants; the plan would delay by a decade reductions required under existing law.

15 Bush approves Yucca Mountain—located 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas—as the nation’s lone repository for high-level nuclear waste.



28 IRS records reveal increases in audits of the working poor; audits of large corporations and the rich drop to all-time lows.

MARCH 2002

1 News reports reveal that Bush activated a “shadow government” after September 11 attacks without telling Congress; civilian administrators are being sequestered in underground bunkers in case of a terrorist attack.

5 Bush’s welfare reform proposal advises paying “workfare” recipients less than the minimum wage.

10 Pentagon’s Nuclear Posture Review calls for new, “low-yield” nuclear weapons and lists seven “rogue” nations as possible targets for a nuclear attack.

27 Bush signs McCain-Feingold bill banning soft money behind closed doors, then departs immediately for a fundraising trip.

APRIL 2002

2 Bush administration opposes the reappointment of climatologist Robert Watson as head on the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change.

5 Office of Management and Budget prevents the EPA from declaring a public health emergency over dangerous asbestos fibers that come from a Montana mine and are used in insulation throughout the country.

Back in the ’70s when George W’s dad was shedding his pro-choice views to curry favor with the religious right, anti-feminists used plain language. Backlash groups like the Eagle Forum called themselves “the alternative to women’s liberation” and dreamed up legislation like 1981’s omnibus Family Protection Act that sought to eliminate federal support for equality in education and legal aid for women seeking divorce. They proposed repealing the Equal Pay Act, censoring birth control information before marriage and banning abortion.

Their legislation stalled because the majority of Americans—then and now—support equality for women in education and the workplace and don’t want to return to the age of back-alley abortions for the poor and back-office secret surgery for the rich. So, the backlash had a makeover.

Today, the very same anti-liberation movement calls itself “pro-family.” Antipathy to women’s equality in the workplace has become “pro-motherhood” and the radical plan to overhaul our society as a faith-based state casts itself as the movement to “defend traditional values.” Bush’s supporters even say “W Stands for Women.” Nothing could be further from the truth.

A “pro-family” president would fund childcare instead of slashing it. Only one in seven children eligible for federal childcare assistance now receives it. As part of its welfare package, the administration has proposed cutting the number of needy children served by the Child Care and Development Block Grant. By its own estimate, the president’s 2005 bud-

get plan would result in 300,000 children losing childcare assistance by fiscal year 2009.

An administration that really stood for women wouldn’t stand for women receiving 75 cents for every man’s dollar for the same hour worked. The pay gap has been growing, not shrinking under George W. Bush, but his administration nonetheless abolished the government’s Equal Pay Matters Initiative and removed fact sheets about equal pay from federal government Web sites.

A president who really cared for mothers wouldn’t support healthcare workers who refuse to offer women legal services. Earlier this fall, the Republican-led House voted to approve a Federal Refusal Clause, which would allow any doctor, hospital or health care provider to refuse to perform an abortion, and refuse to refer a patient seeking an abortion to another doctor, even in the case of rape or medical emergency. BBC News reports that 12 states have taken steps to introduce “conscience clauses” in their state legislatures, allowing pharmacists to refuse to dispense certain prescription drugs, including birth control, without risk of losing their jobs. In recent months, several pharmacists around the country have refused to fill prescriptions for the pill.

Don’t like frivolous lawsuits? Stop passing frivolous laws. The patently unconstitutional Partial Birth Abortion Act, which included no exception for danger to a woman’s life, served Bush’s political purposes, but it’s already been struck down in three states.

The Bush-Cheney campaign likes to use the phrase “flip-flop” to smear Kerry, but

their record is strewn with flip-flopping on the facts. They’ve distorted good science on abortion, sex education and breast cancer.

George W. Bush also loves to trumpet his concern for “the unborn.” He supported the Unborn Victims of Violence Act that granted adult legal status to embryos in uterus. But people really concerned about fetal health would be a whole lot more concerned about chemicals making their way into women’s bodies. They wouldn’t let industry decide how much fetus-destroying mercury is allowed to concentrate in our fish.

A president who cherished individual freedoms also would have qualms about “fetal protection” laws—such as those that now exist in many states—that have a habit of resulting in the policing of pregnant women. Such laws subject pregnant women to different standards than other citizens.

As for democracy, for all his talk, Bush mostly circumvents the people’s Congress. Rather than risk defeat on the question of equal pay or *Roe v. Wade*, for example, Bush’s backslashers have rolled back key equal rights laws behind closed doors. The Department of Education did not announce when it “archived” its guidelines on sexual harassment in schools. Having failed to mobilize support for overturning Title IX (the equality in education law), department appointees simply saw to it that it was rarely enforced.

Even as they appoint extremist judges and await their chance to flip the Supreme Court, the administration has backed regulations that are quietly impeding access not only to safe abortions but to family planning. What

- 12** Bush officials express support for the ouster of Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez; a day after Chavez returns to power, White House admits that U.S. officials had met with coup plotters.

- 17** Administration insiders admit military tactical errors allowed Osama bin Laden to escape December 2001 battle at Tora Bora.



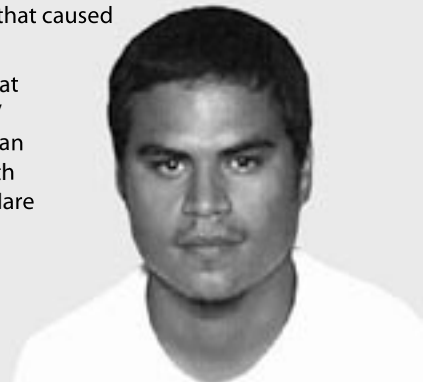
MAY 2002

- 3** EPA alters its definition of "fill material" to allow coal companies to dump rubble from "mountaintop removal" mining into valleys and streams.
- 6** Bush voids the U.S. signature on the treaty to establish an International Criminal Court.
- 23** Senate joins the House in approving "fast-track" trade authority for the president.

- 30** Ashcroft removes restrictions on domestic spying by the FBI in counterterrorism investigations; new guidelines permit monitoring of political and religious groups without probable cause.

JUNE 2002

- 1** President unveils "Bush doctrine" of preemptive war in a speech at West Point.
- 5** National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration weakens standards on under-inflated tires despite problems at Firestone that caused hundreds of deaths.
- 10** Ashcroft announces that alleged "dirty bomber" José Padilla, an American citizen arrested a month earlier at Chicago's O'Hare airport, is being held indefinitely as an "enemy combatant."



global gag rules do abroad—impose a regime of censorship on family-planning groups that need or want U.S. funds—new health department regulations and so-called abstinence grants do at home. The administration's 2005 budget recommends \$270 million for abstinence-only programs that censor information on other ways to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease.

New guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control demand that all such materials include information on the "lack of effectiveness of condom use" in preventing the spread of HIV and other STDs. Again, never mind the science to the contrary.

Why is Bush appealing to some women? Some say it's the way he plays to Americans' fear. But his tax cuts and resulting budget cutbacks are making life for the majority of women more grueling and more perilous, not safer. According to *Business Week*, 24 percent of U.S. workers are making poverty wages with few or no benefits and 58 percent of those workers are women. Food security, health security and security that their kids are not going to be drafted to Iraq—Bush is bringing American women none of those, and his vice president is scaring us to death.

There is one traditional value Bush seems to care little for: telling the truth. When it comes to his record, it's a value in dire need of defense. ■

LAURA FLANDERS is the host of "The Laura Flanders Show on Air America Radio" and the editor, most recently, of *The W Effect: Bush's War on Women*.

Education *By Barbara Miner*

1 Leaving all children behind The shamelessly misnamed No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, a cornerstone of Bush's domestic agenda, uses the rhetoric of "accountability" to undermine public education via a monomaniacal obsession with standardized tests and a trigger-happy willingness to label schools a failure.

2 Vouching for vouchers When schools "fail," as NCLB ensures they will, vouchers and privatization will be presented as the necessary alternatives. Bush already has signed legislation for the first federal voucher program for private schools—a \$50 million "experiment" in Washington, D.C. that is a stalking horse for a national program.

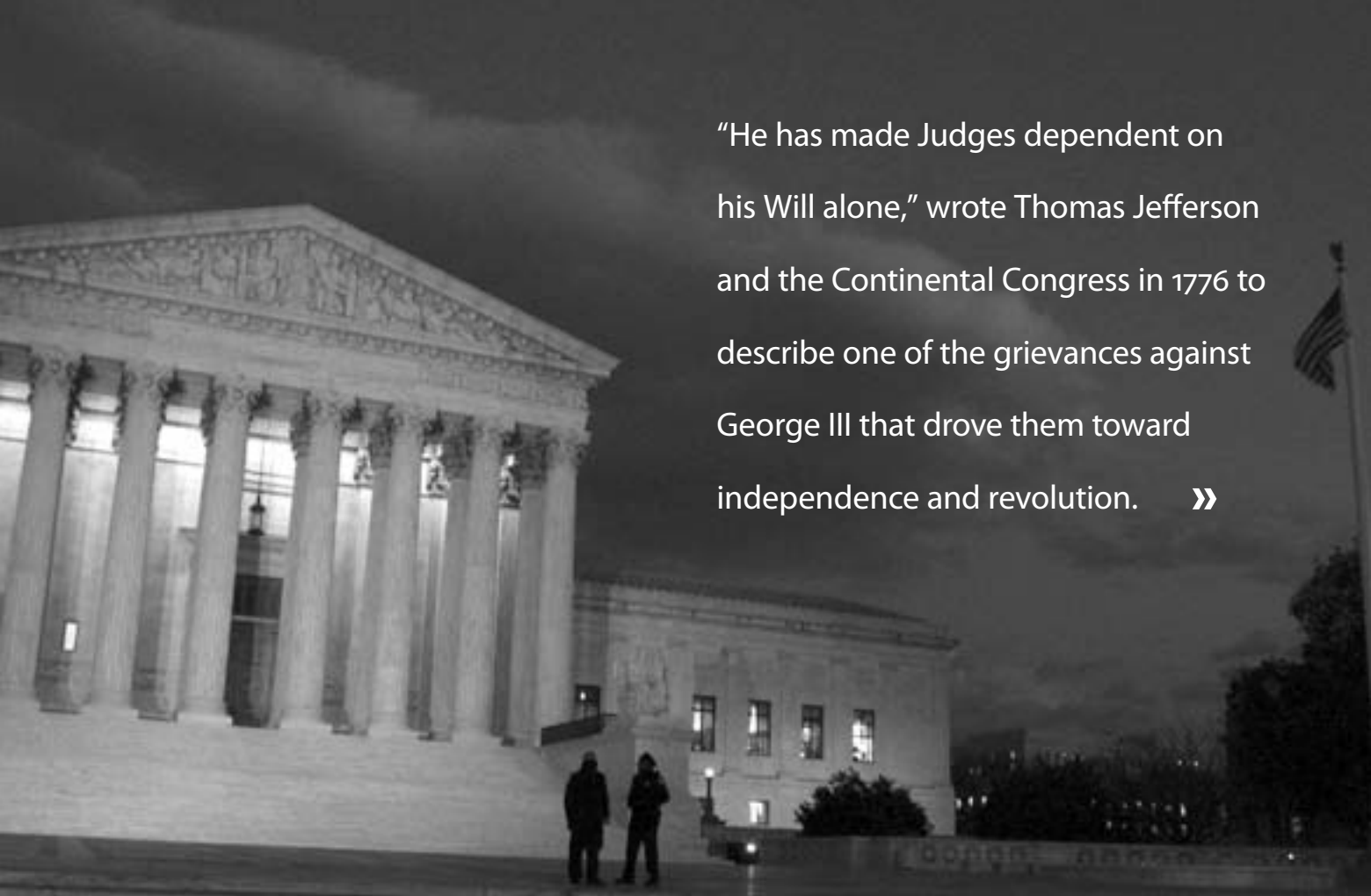
3 Crusading for Christ The Education Department is stocked with anti-union privatizers and religious zealots. Most notable is Secretary of Education Secretary Rod Paige, who has branded the National Education



Association a "terrorist organization" and has said he prefers having children in Christian schools than in public schools "where there are so many kids with different values and different faiths."

4 Promoting privatization plans From 2001 to 2003, the Department of Education gave almost \$78 million in grants to conservative groups promoting privatization. Further, almost two-thirds of NCLB dollars for "supplemental" tutoring are being given to private companies. Overall, some 1,000 private companies are vying for the \$2 billion-plus tutoring market.

5 Failing to adequately fund The Bush 2005 budget underfunds NCLB by billions of dollars—and that's just to fund the law's testing. It would take about a 30 percent annual increase in school spending for states to actually meet the testing goals. In addition, Bush's 2005 budget eliminates monies for 38 education programs such as dropout prevention.



“He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone,” wrote Thomas Jefferson and the Continental Congress in 1776 to describe one of the grievances against George III that drove them toward independence and revolution. »

Dissenters Be Damned!

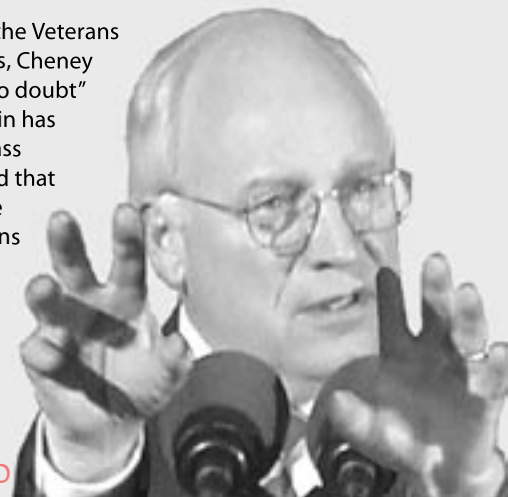
Bush’s conception of judicial interpretation harks back to the dark days of monarchy. *By Stephen J. Fortunato*

JULY 2002

- 14** SEC Chairman Harvey Pitt says he’ll release the entire files on the investigation into Bush’s sale of \$800,000 in Harken Energy stock if asked by the president; the president doesn’t ask.
- 15** Bush administration unveils the Terrorism Information and Prevention System, or Operation TIPS, a toll-free hotline encouraging meter readers and truck drivers to report “suspicious activity.”
- 22** State Department announces it will withhold \$34 million in international family planning funds from the United Nations.
- 25** Bush threatens to veto Homeland Security bill unless workers in the new department are stripped of civil service protections.

AUGUST 2002

- 9** Bush administration issues new medical privacy regulations that don’t require patient consent to share records with insurance and pharmaceutical companies or restrict use of medical information for marketing purposes.
- 26** In a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Cheney says there is “no doubt” Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction and that Iraq could have nuclear weapons “fairly soon.”



Jefferson, James Madison and their collaborators, as students of antiquity and recent European history, knew that a judiciary subservient to the executive was a danger to individual liberty. George W. Bush understands this principle—not as heir to our constitutional forbears, but rather to his monarchical namesake.

Claiming to reign by a manifestation of divine will, Bush has flouted laws and traditions (both national and international), mangled civil liberties and consolidated executive power. As our smirking despot could not have scorched the democratic landscape by himself, his reckless adventurism has been fostered by John Ashcroft, Donald Rumsfeld, and other neocon zealots, a Congress that is craven when not comatose and a mainstream media more aroused by the soiling of a blue dress than the shredding of the Constitution.

The transgressions of Bush and his cabal in the domain of civil liberties have been well-chronicled: the preposterous assertion that detainees, including U.S. citizens, seized in the so-called war on terror and held at Guantánamo Bay, Abu Ghraib and elsewhere have no rights to humane treatment or due process under either international or United States law, a contention rejected even by the Court that anointed him; the Patriot Act, with its secret courts issuing sealed warrants and its National Security Letters allowing warrantless searches authorized only by the sensibilities of the FBI; the push for increased use of capital punishment in federal courts by Ashcroft, who has said, in the face of mountains of statistical evidence to the contrary, “There

is no evidence of racial bias in the administration of the federal death penalty”; the confining of demonstrators in areas far removed from the targets of their protest, whether politicians at party conventions or corporate and government oligarchs at globalization meetings; the mass arrest of protesters without probable cause when they demand their historic rights to assemble in parks and public streets, and so on.

Bush knows that it is not enough to put draconian restrictions into statutes and executive orders. He needs obedient judges to stamp the imprimatur of legitimacy on the raw will of the administration and its cowering lapdog Congress. Bush maintains he has no “litmus test” for the selection of federal judges, but in his stump speeches he never fails to announce that he will only nominate judges who “will faithfully interpret the law, not legislate from the bench.” Bush also reminds his base that he admires Judge Antonin Scalia for his “judicial philosophy”—a philosophy that cynically exalts majority values and prejudices. This is fine with Bush and his clique, who are acutely aware that over the past two decades the opinions of the majority have been shaped by a mass media serving as the unashamed conduit for the dominant political and economic ideology, minorities and dissenters be damned.

A telling example of Bush’s vision of judicial fitness is William Pryor, now serving as a recess appointment to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. During his time as Attorney General of Alabama, Pryor pronounced *Roe v. Wade* “the worst abomination of constitutional law

in our history,” apparently forgetting the pernicious sanctioning of slavery in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857), or the approval of the internment of American citizens solely because of their Japanese ancestry in *Korematsu v. United States* (1944). Pryor’s pronouncement that “the challenge of the next millennium will be to preserve the American experiment by restoring its Christian perspective,” makes him a paradigm of a Bush judge, one who will keep civil rights advocates, gays and feminists at bay, and who will express no qualms about Bush-Ashcroft dragnets of brown-skinned, Muslim people.

To justify the scrapping of civil liberties, Bush and his apparatchiks have attempted to rewrite Anglo-American legal history by falsely claiming that laws can be readily interpreted and that judges have no role other than to strictly apply them. Even Bush’s divine-right predecessors acknowledged the prerogatives of judges to restrain executive or legislative abuses. In 1616, King James I directed his chancellor, Francis Bacon, to draft a message signaling that the letter of the law could be trumped by considerations of equity and fairness. Bacon obliged, noting that judges enjoyed discretion to save “our subjects” from being “exposed to perish under the rigor and extremity of our laws.” Unlike King James I, Bush refuses to have his powers abated.

Writing 300 years after Bacon, Judge Jerome Frank, in his classic *Law and the Modern Mind* (1930), surveyed American legal history and concluded that it is impossible to “create a body of rules which will exclude judicial innovation and thereby guarantee

SEPTEMBER 2002

- 5 Bush administration presents Healthy Forests Initiative that would allow more logging of old-growth forests by limiting environmental impact reviews and public comment.
- 19 Bush asks Congress for authority to use “all means that he determines to be appropriate” against Iraq.

OCTOBER 2002

- 5 North Korea admits to having secret nuclear weapons program; Bush officials don’t publicly disclose the news until October 16.
- 8 Bush invokes the Taft-Hartley Act to end an 11-day lockout of longshore workers that has shut down West Coast ports.

NOVEMBER 2002

- 5 Harvey Pitt resigns after failing to disclose that newly appointed accounting oversight board chairman William Webster had headed the audit committee of a firm accused of accounting improprieties and fraud.
- 20 Pentagon defends development of the “Total Information Awareness” system, a scheme developed by Iran-Contra veteran John Poindexter to mine private data for terrorism clues.
- 27 Bush names Henry Kissinger to head independent commission investigating September 11 attacks.



complete predictability.” In the universe of George W. Bush, the “law” is not to be modified or rejected by judges, nor are courts to offer protection to minorities or dissidents. If this noxious and historically unsupportable view had prevailed in 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* would have preserved racially segregated schools.

More than 200 years of U.S. legal tradition also contradict Bush’s insistence that the “war on terror” permits him to recast the relationship of governmental prerogatives to individual liberties. James Madison did not draft the Bill of Rights with limiting provisos or riders attached to it. In 1866, with the rubble of the Civil War still smoldering, the U.S. Supreme Court rebuffed President Lincoln’s suspension of *habeas corpus* in regions where courts were still functioning, saying in *Ex parte Milligan*: “No doctrine, involving more pernicious consequences, was ever invented by the wit of man than that any of [the Constitution’s] provisions can be suspended during any of the great exigencies of government. Such a doctrine leads directly to anarchy or despotism.”

So far, Bush has appointed nearly 200 people, or 22.6 percent of all active judges, to the federal bench. By selecting judges who swear fealty to his ersatz majoritarianism (ersatz because the majority’s consciousness is at once shaped and ratified by the corporate media), the great pretender seeks to build a foundation for the House of Bush that will endure for generations. If liberals, progressives, leftists and old-fashioned conservatives don’t unite to stop him, he just might succeed. ■

STEPHEN J. FORTUNATO JR. is Associate Justice with the Rhode Island Superior Court.

DECEMBER 2002

- 6** Bush dismisses Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill and economic adviser Lawrence Lindsey as the unemployment rate hits 6 percent.
- 17** Bush orders initial missile defense system to be in place by 2004.
- 19** Office of Management and Budget instructs the Environmental Protection Agency to value the lives of senior citizens at 63 percent that of younger Americans in a cost-benefit analysis of imposing new air pollution regulations.

Wedge Issues *By Hans Johnson*

1 Declaring open season on anti-bias laws In July 2001, the Bush administration announced a plan to undermine municipal and state nondiscrimination laws through its Faith Based Initiative (FBI). The plan came to light when a reporter noticed that the White House was luring the Salvation Army to join in its push to breach the wall between church and state by pledging to trump such local ordinances in the policy it was crafting. Bush’s “other FBI” has continued to draw sour reviews, except as a get-out-the-vote tool to woo church leaders with the promise of taxpayers’ cash after reelection.

2 Abetting bigotry via back-room deals In fall 2001, the administration was poised to nominate J. Robert Brame, an anti-union organizer, to head the National Labor Relations Board. But Brame’s record of defending voter purging, denouncing affirmative action, and disparaging gays through involvement on the board of two far-right antigay religious groups drew criticism in the press and on Capitol Hill. Facing a fight with the Senate, then narrowly in Democratic hands, the White House backed down and Brame withdrew.

3 Waging holy war against freedom Bush has sought to stack the courts with ideologues whose unstinting attacks on human rights leave no liberty behind. Bush’s favorite justice, Antonin Scalia, excoriated the ruling by his more enlightened Supreme Court colleagues in *Lawrence v. Texas*. The narrow 5-4



decision in June 2003 nixed draconian state sodomy laws. Prodded by his Senate ally, Rick Santorum, Bush later installed antigay and anti-abortion extremist William Pryor on the 11th Circuit bench.

In July 2004 Pryor cast a tie-breaking vote supporting a Florida ban on gay adoptive parents. If fortunate enough to be re(s)ected, Bush could appoint as many as four Supremes and tilt the 800-seat federal judiciary even further to the right.

4 Prying into private records After cheering Bush’s November 2003 signature on an anti-abortion bill that could cost pregnant women their lives, John Ashcroft sought to squash a lawsuit against the bill by going after the medical records of patients at Planned Parenthood facilities. A judge had to intercede to halt Ashcroft’s fishing expedition. And three judges ruled against the law, saying it violated women’s right to privacy.

5 Putting prejudice in the Constitution Against the counsel of some of Congress’ leading conservatives, Bush backed an amendment to the U.S. Constitution to bar same-sex marriage. In pushing the proposal, he sought guidance from Jerry Falwell and Lou Sheldon, the sorts of extremists he denounced for blaming America for 9/11. This gambit wasn’t a flip-flop. It was a flop: The Senate bounced the bid in a 48-to-50 cloture vote in July. Bush vote-counters had hoped the drive might reach the needed 67 votes to advance to the states.

JANUARY 2003

- 9** Transportation Security Administration bars 56,000 airport screeners from unionizing.
- 10** Bush administration issues guidelines that could exempt up to 20 million acres of “isolated” wetlands and seasonal streams from protection under the Clean Water Act.
- 15** Bush denounces affirmative action policies at the University of Michigan as an unconstitutional “quota system.”





Millennial Madness

Bush's imperial foreign policy is doomed to repeat a sordid history. *By David Moberg*

HISTORY IS LIKELY TO JUDGE George W. Bush's response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks as follows: He squandered a unique opportunity for global cooperation on international security in favor of a unilateralist and imperialist foreign policy that aggravated terrorism, undermined American world leadership and increased global instability. That's already the dominant viewpoint in most of the world, and the American people are steadily moving toward the same conclusion, if not quickly enough.

The invasion of Iraq was the first great foray of the new Bush imperialism. But from the beginning of his administration, the president rejected the multilateral framework of international relations that had been growing stronger in recent decades. Shortly after taking office Bush repudiated such key treaties as the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty and the International Criminal Court. At the time of the terrorist attacks, the United States also had failed to sign two international treaties designed to curb terrorism.

Whatever the shortcomings of such international treaties, they all contribute to global and national security and their rejection makes Americans less secure. The administration argues that it is preserving American sovereignty, but as a new study from the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy argues, the administration willingly surrenders sovereignty in trade agreements "that extend its control over the world's resources" but is "less interested in those that promote the rights of people and protect the planet."

The war in Iraq took unilateralism a giant step forward with a war that, as U.N. Secre-

29 Bush claims in his State of the Union address that Saddam Hussein "recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa."

30 Bush administration seeks exemptions to international treaty banning the ozone-depleting chemical methyl bromide for use on golf courses, among other things.

FEBRUARY 2003

5 Secretary of State Colin Powell appears before the U.N. Security Council to make the case for war with Iraq.

MARCH 2003

7 U.N. official exposes as fakes documents showing Iraq attempted to buy uranium from Niger.

8 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers awards no-bid contract with a \$7 billion limit to a Halliburton subsidiary for fighting possible oil well fires in Iraq.

19 War on Iraq begins.

27 Department of Labor proposes new overtime rules that could strip millions of extra pay by increasing the number of exempt "white-collar" workers.

APRIL 2003

7 Education Secretary Rod Paige says he prefers schools that have a "strong appreciation for the values of the Christian community."

12 Congress approves Bush's request for \$79 billion to fund the Iraq War and reconstruction.

28 Bush administration refuses to sign international anti-tobacco treaty without a "reservation clause" allowing any country to opt out of portions it doesn't like.



MAY 2003

1 Aboard an aircraft carrier—with a banner touting "Mission Accomplished" as his backdrop—Bush declares victory in Iraq.

22 Bush issues an executive order shielding oil companies in Iraq from legal liability.

27 One-third of the prevention funds in the \$15 billion AIDS bill signed by Bush are earmarked for abstinence education.

28 Bush signs \$350 billion tax cut—half the size of his original proposal—slashing tax rates on dividends and capital gains.

29 On a trip to Poland, Bush says: "We found the weapons of mass destruction. We found biological laboratories. ... For those who say we haven't found the banned manufacturing devices or banned weapons, they're wrong, we found them."

tary General Kofi Annan recently noted, was illegal and is losing more legitimacy every passing day. The collapse of the Iraqi army showed how little of a threat Saddam posed to his neighbors, let alone the United States. In early October, chief U.S. arms inspector Charles Duelfer reported that Iraq destroyed virtually all its chemical and biological weapons in 1991. And in an exhaustive October 3 report, the *New York Times* revealed how the administration ignored and overrode the preponderant intelligence analyses that cast doubt on its false claims that Saddam had a nuclear weapons program.

son. Judis argues that since its founding there has been in the United States a culture of "civil millennialism," a notion that Americans are a chosen people with a moral mission to change the world and create an "empire for liberty." Until the late 19th Century, that mission was channeled into the conquest of the "savage" Indians or expulsion of Mexicans as the nation expanded its reach. While the precise mission and means changed over time, this sense of righteous American exceptionalism was as important politically as more self-interested economic ambitions. When the United States—con-

gringos, President Woodrow Wilson even more adamantly decided that it was impossible—and undesirable—to impose governments on other nations.

Wilson's ideals for the League of Nations, despite the fatal dilution of support for national self-determination and America's retreat into isolationism in the '20s and '30s, defined the multilateral approach to global problem-solving that became the basis of the United Nations. In the name of fighting communism, however, the United States often opposed anti-imperialist movements and manipulated multilateral institutions in the service of its foreign policy. But after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, Judis argues, the United States had an opportunity to pursue a more ambitious multilateral approach. George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton both did so, but at the same time neoconservatives were agitating for a new American imperialism.

Iraq was the target because neoconservatives wanted to remake the governments of the Middle East, to secure long-term U.S. access to oil, to open the economies to American investment and to protect Israel through installation of governments friendly to the United States. Besides falsifying the reasons for invasion and casting the war in the millennial terms of good against evil, the neoconservatives completely misunderstood the political realities of the Middle East and reverted to the discredited idea that military might alone can prevail in international relations. As Judis argues, rebel Islamist groups are in many ways products of anti-colonial sentiment, and consequently, the United States, through its invasion of Iraq, is provoking the same nationalist rebellion that earlier colonial powers did. In addition, the neo-

Bush has revived the age old belief of "civil millennialism," the notion that Americans have a moral mission to create an 'empire for liberty.'

Saddam had no connection to the World Trade Center attacks, as the 9/11 Commission concluded. And both the CIA and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld even recently admitted there is no proof of any connection between Saddam and al Qaeda.

It is now clear that Bush used 9/11 as an excuse to carry out an invasion of Iraq that many of his top administration officials had long advocated. But the question remains: Why did the Bush administration want to go to war in Iraq? And if this is the start of a new imperialism, what shape will it take?

Political journalist John B. Judis provides an invaluable historical perspective on these questions in his new book *The Folly of Empire: What George W. Bush Could Learn from Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wil-*

son. Judis argues that since its founding there has been in the United States a culture of "civil millennialism," a notion that Americans are a chosen people with a moral mission to change the world and create an "empire for liberty." Until the late 19th Century, that mission was channeled into the conquest of the "savage" Indians or expulsion of Mexicans as the nation expanded its reach. While the precise mission and means changed over time, this sense of righteous American exceptionalism was as important politically as more self-interested economic ambitions. When the United States—con-

fronted with the European scramble for colonies in the late 19th Century—declared war against Spain, there was a heated debate over whether our conquest of the Philippines, for example, was a betrayal or an embodiment of American ideals. As Secretary of the Navy in the McKinley administration, Theodore Roosevelt—a hero to neoconservatives and to Bush—lobbied for war with Spain. But, Judis notes, after a long and bloody war against nationalist guerrillas in the Philippines and nationalist resistance to other imperial forays, Roosevelt lost faith in imperialism and turned toward the idea of an international League of Peace. After his own imperial foray into Mexico, which prompted antagonistic forces in Mexico to unite against the

- 2** FCC increases media ownership cap, allowing one company to own TV stations reaching up to 45 percent of the country, and lifts the ban on a single company's owning newspapers, TV stations and radio stations in the same city.
- 2** Inspector general finds that the Justice Department violated the civil rights of hundreds of immigrants detained after 9/11.
- 25** Federal Energy Regulatory Commission rejects California's request to cancel \$12 billion in long-term contracts signed during the state's energy crisis despite evidence of market manipulation by energy companies.



- 1** Bush administration suspends military aid to 35 countries that refused to grant U.S. citizens immunity before the International Criminal Court.
- 14** Columnist Robert Novak outs the wife of retired ambassador Joseph Wilson as a CIA agent after discussions with "two senior administration officials."
- 15** SEC chairman William Donaldson endorses House bill seeking to limit the ability of state regulators to oversee the securities industry.
- 24** Congress publishes report on September 11 attacks, but the White House omits major portions (reportedly about Saudi Arabia) for "national security" reasons.
- 28** Congress exposes Pentagon plans to create a futures trading market to forecast terrorist attacks.



conservatives misjudged the effectiveness of their ideologically driven economic policies.

John Kerry and others have faulted Bush for not having a plan for post-invasion Iraq, but as reporter Naomi Klein argued in the September issue of *Harper's* magazine, the United States did have a plan—a radical economic shock therapy of privatization and unregulated opening of Iraq to the international market. It was the International Monetary Fund strategy on steroids, and it devastated the Iraqi economy, brought in no foreign investment, and did as much as anything to generate the widespread and growing insurgency.

Kerry offers the alternative of multilateralism, but that is only part of what is necessary. Invading Iraq with more allies was not the answer. The substance of multilateral strategy must change as well. Multilateral imposition of the economic plan the United States has tried to impose on Iraq would be no more desirable. The IMF as it now exists is an example of multilateralism that is often more destructive than helpful. The International Criminal Court, on the other hand, is a more positive kind of multilateral initiative.

Although Americans continue to believe that theirs is the country chosen to bring freedom and democracy to the world, a recent survey by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations found that the overwhelming majority of Americans endorse a multilateral approach to international issues, reject the notion of pre-emptive war, do not believe the United States should act as global policeman and support treaties like the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. On all these issues three-fourths or more of Americans oppose the Bush administration positions.

In many other countries, both rich and

The Economy *By Dean Baker*

1 Laboring for job loss Bush is the first president since Herbert Hoover to actually lose jobs during his term. (Typically, the economy creates 8 million jobs in four years.) The economy has 913,000 fewer jobs today than when Bush took office in 2001. Tax cuts for the rich were not an effective stimulus.

2 Building up the housing bubble The limited economic growth since 2001 was driven by a housing bubble. The unprecedented run-up in home prices spurred a construction boom and a massive wave of consumer borrowing. When the bubble bursts, millions of homeowners will be devastated and we will have another recession.

3 Driving the dollar toward disaster President Bush has continued the high dollar policy of the Clinton administration. The over-valued dollar makes U.S.

goods uncompetitive in world markets. We are now borrowing more than \$650 billion a year from abroad to cover our trade deficit.

4 Amassing massive deficits Locking in tax cuts for the rich threatens the country with massive budget deficits far into the future. Taxes to finance general government—which excludes Social Security and Medicare taxes—are less than 10 percent of GDP, their lowest level since before World War II.

5 Pumping up the Pentagon Bush boosted military spending by \$100 billion a year in addition to his war-related spending. This is a major economic drain. Standard economic models show that this additional spending will lead to the loss of about 1 million jobs.



poor, people have a deep mistrust of the new multilateral global economic order that gives power to corporations and financial markets at the expense of workers and citizens. If John Kerry—should he win—wants to provide a lasting alternative to Bush's new imperialism, he will have to do more than

emphasize multilateralism. He will have to insure that the old colonialism is not simply replaced with a new imperialism enforced multilaterally. And if he wants to learn rather than repeat a history lesson from Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, he will get out of Iraq as quickly as possible. ■



Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?

Despite the claims of some leftists, there's a dire difference between Bush and Kerry for African Americans. *By Paul Street*

AUGUST 2003

- 9** EPA inspector general finds that the agency downplayed health risks from the collapse of the World Trade Center under pressure from the White House.
- 20** Ashcroft begins nationwide tour to promote the Patriot Act.
- 27** EPA repeals New Source Review rule that had required electric utilities to install anti-pollution equipment when making major upgrades at coal-fired power plants.

SEPTEMBER 2003

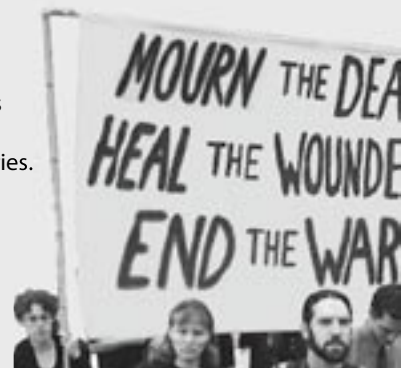
- 1** Job losses over the past three years top 2.7 million.
- 7** Bush asks Congress for another \$87 billion to fund the occupation of Iraq.
- 17** Bush admits there is no evidence tying Saddam Hussein to September 11 attacks.
- 22** FCC approves the merger of Univision and Hispanic Broadcasting, handing over more than 80 percent of the Spanish-language radio and television market to one company.

OCTOBER 2003

- 21** Congress bans late-term abortions.
- 29** U.N. official warns of "a palpable risk that Afghanistan will again turn into a failed state, this time in the hands of drug cartels and narco-terrorists."
- 31** 13,000 Arab and Muslim immigrants are in deportation proceedings as a result of special registration programs; none has been charged in connection to terrorism.

NOVEMBER 2003

- 21** Senate blocks energy bill, a massive boondoggle that traces its origins to Cheney's secretive energy task force and would provide billions of dollars in subsidies to some of Bush's biggest supporters in the oil and gas, coal, and electric utility industries.
- 23** FBI admits collecting intelligence on antiwar protesters.



BENEATH THEIR VAST MORAL AND ideological differences, George W. Bush and Ralph Nader have something in common: difficulty attracting black voters. A mid-September CBS News poll of African-Americans found that zero percent support Nader, 8 percent prefer Bush, and 80 percent plan to vote for John Kerry.

According to a recent article in the *New York Times*, many black Americans see Kerry as “stiff and distant,” and speak about the Democratic contender with “polite reserve, as if he were a distant cousin, more rumor, so far, than actual family relation.”

But Kerry will sweep the black vote because of Bush’s terrible record on issues and an understanding that Nader can only play a spoiler role under the winner-take-all rules of the electoral system. African-Americans also widely understand that Bush owes his current job to the systematic disenfranchisement of black voters in Florida in 2000.

Beneath the cover of a “war on terror” that has so far killed nearly 150 African-American soldiers in Iraq and against the backdrop of an economic slowdown that pushed 700,000 more blacks into poverty by 2003, the White House has pursued a radically regressive agenda that hurts millions of African-Americans. Bush policies that distribute wealth and power further upward in the U.S. (the industrialized world’s most unequal and wealth-top-heavy nation by far) worsen the plight of a black popula-

tion already disparately victimized under Bill Clinton by poverty, unemployment, and a large number of related socioeconomic and political maladies. African-Americans are disproportionately reliant on poverty-related government programs—including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Medicaid, Head Start, Title I School Funding, Pell Grants (college tuition assistance for economically disadvantaged students) and much more—that have been frozen and cut back to make way for other Bush priorities like tax cuts for the rich and imperial wars.

Only one disproportionately black government program has expanded under Bush: mass imprisonment. The black incarceration rate, already astronomical under Clinton, has reached a new pinnacle under Bush. By early 2003, 12 percent of African-American males between ages 20 and 34 were locked up in prisons. The Justice Department’s decision to increase the number of prosecutions for federal drug offenses, combined with recession and program cuts, drive this chilling expansion.

Bush’s talk of an economy that is “strong and getting stronger” is received with cynicism in numerous distressed and isolated black communities, where more than half of adults are now unattached to the labor market and as much as a third of the children live at *less than half* of the nation’s notoriously low and inadequate poverty level. “Bush is a spoiled rich boy,” one African-American res-

ident of southwest Philadelphia recently told the *New York Times*, “I don’t see no growth. I don’t see nothing to be stimulated.”

Between January 2001 and January 2004, black unemployment rose by 28 percent. By 2002, that increase had helped push the black poverty rate to 24 percent (twice the white poverty rate) and moved the percentage of blacks without health insurance to 20 percent. In contrast, in the Clinton era, black unemployment and poverty fell.

To make matters worse, the Bush administration intervened (unsuccessfully) against affirmative action at the University of Michigan. It has nominated for the federal bench a large number of right-wingers who oppose core civil rights measures and principles, and appointed conservatives to head key civil rights agencies. Bush has declined invitations to speak at the national convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and chose Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday to unilaterally appoint an especially notorious racist judge (Charles Pickering) to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals last winter.

As bad as Bush’s first term has been for black Americans, a return engagement could well be worse. A second Bush administration will expand the attack on civil rights and public programs—including the public school system and Social Security (the privatization of which is a top second-term Bush priority)—that matter to people of color. The next president is likely to ap-

- 24** Congressional Republicans and the White House agree to a “compromise” media ownership cap of 39 percent—ensuring that neither Viacom nor News Corp. will be forced to sell any television stations.
- 25** Senate passes \$400 billion, Bush-backed Medicare bill, which guarantees a prescription drug benefit starting in 2006 but prevents the government from negotiating lower prices with pharmaceutical companies.

DECEMBER 2003

- 3** Medicare chief Tom Scully announces he’s stepping down to consider job offers from three lobbying and two investment firms.
- 23** Bush administration opens 300,000 acres of old-growth timber in Alaska’s Tongass National Forest to logging.
- 30** After first case of “mad cow” disease is detected in the United States, USDA bans sale of “downer” cattle—a measure quashed by the agency just weeks earlier.



JANUARY 2004

- 5** Cheney and Justice Antonin Scalia go duck hunting together three weeks after the Supreme Court agrees to hear a case about the vice president’s energy task force records.
- 16** During a congressional recess, Bush appoints Charles Pickering—whose nomination has been blocked twice by the Senate—to the U.S. Court of Appeals.
- 22** Interior Department opens nearly 9 million acres of wilderness on Alaska’s North Slope to oil drilling.
- 23** Chief U.S. weapons inspector David Kay resigns, saying he doesn’t believe Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction ever existed.
- 29** Bush administration reports that the new Medicare law will cost at least \$530 billion over 10 years, 30 percent more than Congress was told it would cost.



FEBRUARY 2004

- 6** Bush relents and appoints commission on pre-war intelligence, calls for it to report findings after the presidential election.
- 9** President's Council of Economic Advisers suggests positions at fast-food restaurants should be counted as manufacturing jobs.
- 18** A group of 60 top U.S. scientists, including a dozen Nobel Prize winners, accuses the Bush administration of "misrepresenting and suppressing scientific knowledge for political purposes."

MARCH 2004

- 12** Medicare actuary says Bush administration threatened to fire him if he told Congress that the White House Medicare plan would cost more than \$400 billion.
- 24** At the Radio and Television Correspondents' dinner Bush presents slides of himself looking under tables and out the windows of the Oval Office while commenting "Those weapons of mass destruction must be somewhere!" and "Nope, no weapons over there!"

APRIL 2004

- 1** Bush signs the "Unborn Victims of Violence Act."
- 2** Bush and Cheney appear at a private retreat for the more than 500 Rangers and Pioneers who have collected at least \$100,000 for the president's campaign.
- 10** After two years of stonewalling, Bush releases declassified version of the April 6, 2001, Presidential Daily Briefing warning "Bin Ladin Determined to Strike in U.S."
- 13** In just the third prime-time press conference of his term, Bush is stumped when asked to name one mistake from his three-plus years in office. He replies, "I'm sure something will pop into my head here in the midst of this press conference, with all the pressure of trying to come up with an answer, but it hasn't yet."
- 28** CBS television airs first images of torture and abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison.



point at least one and very possibly two or three Supreme Court justices. And Bush, if elected, can be counted on to fill those critical seats with people who will work, in the words of Ralph Neas, executive director of People for the American Way, "to overturn 75 years of jurisprudence, gutting environmental regulations, abortion rights and a host of civil rights." For the right, the best scenario would be the appointment of two justices. That would give Antonin Scalia, William Rehnquist and Clarence Thomas the ideological soul mates needed to correct the high court's mistake, among others, of keeping affirmative action alive in the Michigan case.

Those on the left who think there's just a "dime's worth of difference" between corporate-Coke Kerry and corporate-Pepsi Bush will not get far with African-Americans this fall. Most issue-attentive blacks know that small variation between the two major-party presidential candidates translates into some very big disparities for people of color and those at the bottom of the nation's deep race and class wells. They know that one person's dime's worth of difference is another person's dollar's worth and that that dollar's worth can be the difference between keeping one's head above water or not. Kerry might be Coke, but many blacks think, Bush is crack. ■

PAUL STREET is vice president for research and planning at the Chicago Urban League.

Class Warfare *By David Moberg*

1 Rewarding the richest Before the latest round of tax cuts skewed to the rich, Bush cut the corporate government expenses by nearly half and had provided the top 1 percent of households an average tax cut of \$35,000 this year—54 times the average of \$647 for the middle 20 percent.

2 Stimulating recession The flawed tax-cut package failed to stimulate the economy effectively. The result: nearly 1 million fewer jobs now than in 2000, including 2.7 million fewer in manufacturing. That means roughly 8 million fewer jobs than would exist now in a typical recovery from a recession. Real wages have stagnated in the recovery; profits have risen faster than average.

3 Putting profits before people Five million more people lack health insurance now than in 2000, including nearly 2.4 million children. Healthcare costs skyrocketed—a 60 percent

hike in employer-paid family coverage since 2000—but Bush blocked bargaining for lower prescription costs and boosted subsidies to private insurers.

4 Bargaining for bosses Bush wants to eliminate overtime pay for roughly 6 million workers. His National Labor Relations Board is on the verge of undermining unions' most effective organizing strategy. There has been no minimum wage increase and inadequate job training and unemployment compensation for displaced workers.

5 Globalizing discontent Bush refuses to link labor rights to trade and pushes a souped-up version of NAFTA for the western hemisphere. Both manufacturing and white-collar jobs are moving offshore more rapidly, with the encouragement of the administration and its policies.



29 Bush and Cheney appear together behind closed doors in the Oval Office to answer questions from commissioners on the September 11 attacks panel.

30 Sinclair Broadcasting refuses to air "Nightline" broadcast reading the names of the U.S. dead in Iraq on its ABC affiliates.

MAY 2004

4 Army acknowledges it is investigating at least 35 cases of abuse or torture of prisoners in Iraq and Afghanistan.

20 Bush campaign fundraising hits \$200 million.

20 Iraqi and U.S. security forces raid the home of Ahmed Chalabi, leader of the Iraqi National Congress, which had been receiving \$330,000 monthly from the State Department. He is accused of spying for Iran.

26 Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham announces a program for recovering radioactive material that could potentially be used in a "dirty bomb" from the former Soviet Union—by 2010.

JUNE 2004

3 CIA Director George Tenet resigns.

8 John Ashcroft refuses to give the Senate Judiciary Committee a Justice Department memo outlining a legal justification for the torture of suspected terrorists.

16 The 9/11 Commission finds "no credible evidence" linking Saddam Hussein to the attacks; Dick Cheney continues to claim "overwhelming evidence" of a connection between Iraq and Al Qaeda.

24 Supreme Court rules that Dick Cheney doesn't have to give up records of secretive energy task force, sends case back to a lower court.

28 In a secret ceremony, United States hands over formal sovereignty of Iraq to interim government; U.S. administrator L. Paul Bremer declares Iraq "a better place" and immediately leaves the country.

28 Supreme Court rules against the Bush administration, insisting that "enemy combatants" must be allowed to challenge their imprisonment before an American judge.

It would be difficult for a president to express more disregard for the environment than George W. Bush. »

A Dangerous Legacy

Bush's "ownership society" champions a hyper-individualism that threatens the commons. *By Adam Werbach*

Bush refused to act on global warming, declaring the Kyoto treaty dead. He refused to continue the Superfund program, sticking Americans with a multi-billion-dollar tab for cleaning up corporate toxic waste. He refused to enforce the Clean Air Act and shelved years worth of legal work by the Environmental Protection Agency to hold power plants accountable for breaking pollution laws. From the downright absence of discussion of the environment in his State of the Union address to his decision to appoint anti-regulation oil and gas industry lobbyist J. Steven Griles as Deputy Secretary of the Interior, his consistent hostility has sent shivers down the spine of every nature-loving American.

Although Bush's attacks on the environment virtually match those conducted against the rest of America, the environment stands apart from these other issues. Unlike a Bush-appointed federal judge who eventually will retire or an ill-conceived tax policy that can be reversed, once the environment is sacrificed it cannot be revived.

But Bush's most insidious action to date has been changing the terms of the debate on the environment, effectively making extremism the new standard.

The success of the Bush administration's assault on the environment suggests a much larger failure in what we collectively assumed was an unstoppable march toward greater respect for our fellow humans and the broader natural world. Facts about mis-

deeds alone are no longer enough to stop the encroachment on nature, our bodies and our civil rights. Many progressives can't comprehend why the majority of Americans continue to think the president is a strong leader and at the same time admit that he gets the facts wrong, whether it's weapons of mass destruction in Iraq or calling an increase in mercury releases in the air an environmental achievement. Even more alarming is the rapid decline in support for environmentalism that predates Bush. From 1996 to 2000 the percentage of Americans willing to accept higher pollution in the future to preserve jobs rose from 17 percent to 25 percent, according to an in-depth national values survey conducted by Environics. At the same time the number of Americans who believe that people who belong to environmental groups are extremists rose from 32 percent to 41 percent. While the 2004 results of this survey have yet to be released, the numbers likely will continue to suggest that the age of environmentalism is waning.

The core of the problem lies in the progressive approach to solving problems through policy initiatives, rather than refocusing the debate on the underlying values that are being attacked. The Bush administration has spoken plainly about their values project: The creation of an ownership society.

The CATO Institute, the preeminent champion of the ownership society, defines it

as follows: "An ownership society values responsibility, liberty and property. Individuals are empowered by freeing them from dependence on government handouts and making them owners instead, in control of their own lives and destinies. In the ownership society, patients control their own health care, parents control their own children's education, and workers control their retirement savings."

The values represented by a society where individuals own everything are anathema to the collective values of stewardship and ecological protection that science tells us we must foster to sustain natural systems burdened by the size and consumption patterns of the global population. In an ownership society, everyone has the right to own the most-polluting sports utility vehicle; in a society with commons values, those people who buy polluting SUVs are responsible for paying higher taxes to compensate society for taking from the common atmospheric resource we share. The commons values that we have relied upon since the Great Depression have been the underpinning of the economic and cultural growth of America. From Social Security to public education to the Clean Water Act, the framework for progressive political action has been the commons.

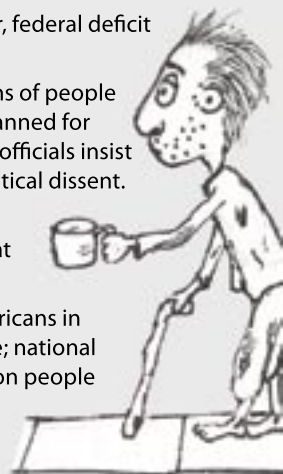
Today, the commons framework is under attack, and the individual movements that progressives have created to maintain our commons values are impotent to fight the larger battle through the lens of individual

JULY 2004

- 8** Tom Ridge warns that al Qaeda may strike on Election Day, seeks advice from Justice Department on steps to postpone elections in case of terrorist attacks.
- 15** National Labor Relations Board rules that graduate teaching assistants at private universities do not have the right to organize.
- 20** Bush lawyers move to block lawsuits against drug companies and medical device makers, arguing that consumers may not seek damages for injuries received from products approved by the FDA.
- 28** After 24 years in Afghanistan, Doctors Without Borders pulls out of the country, criticizes U.S. forces for endangering aid workers by using humanitarian assistance as "a support for its military and political ambitions."
- 30** GOP requires signed endorsement of president before giving out tickets to New Mexico rally starring Dick Cheney.
- 30** Bush issues 20 recess appointments, skirting Senate approval to install, among others, head of the Federal Trade Commission, manufacturing czar, and three ambassadors—two of whom are major fundraisers.

AUGUST 2004

- 1** Two days after the Democratic convention, Tom Ridge raises terror alert level to "orange" for New York and Washington; heightened security based on 3- to 4-year-old intelligence.
- 5** At a ceremony to sign a \$417 billion Defense appropriations bill, Bush tells the assembled Pentagon brass: "Our enemies are innovative and resourceful, and so are we. They never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people, and neither do we."
- 11** With two months left in the fiscal year, federal deficit hits a record \$395.8 billion.
- 15** FBI acknowledges interviewing dozens of people in at least six states about protests planned for the Republican National Convention; officials insist they're only targeting crimes, not political dissent.
- 24** Bush-Cheney campaign's top outside counsel admits advising the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth.
- 27** For third consecutive year, more Americans in poverty and without health insurance; national poverty rate hits 12.5 percent, 45 million people lack health coverage.



issues. Most environmentalists would not think that fighting against school vouchers and privatizing public education are the most important battlefronts for the protection of our forests. But if the battle is for the value of ownership versus the value of the commons, winning the fight over public education in a way that raises the profile of commons values may very well be the best battle that environmentalists can fight. Likewise, campaign finance reform advocates may find their most effective battle to be the reining in of the oil and coal industries' attempts to seize public mineral rights, for there is no better example of private greed subverting the American political system.

The Bush administration's greatest victory over the environmental movement has been changing in the terms of debate. Our challenge is not to create specific policy initiatives to counter each of the administration's corporate giveaways, but to change the values framework that allows them to get away with it. If progressives can counter the advance of the ownership society, we'll stand a better chance of stopping environmental insults, and in the process, we might save public education as well. ■

ADAM WERBACH is executive director of the Common Assets Defense Fund and a member of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. He is a former president of the Sierra Club, a position to which he was elected at the age of 23.

Healthcare *By Steffie Woolhandler*

1 Ensuring more uninsured The number of uninsured Americans grew from 39.8 million in 2000 to 45 million in 2003, yet the Bush administration did nothing to curb the spike.



erage. Most of the money is to be shipped straight to drug companies and HMOs.

5 Protecting corporate profits The administration used

2 Assailing the sickly The Bush administration sat by as healthcare costs increased from \$4,670 per capita in 2000 to \$6,167 this year. As a result, millions of people with coverage face financial ruin because of rising premiums, co-payments and uncovered services.

3 Subsidizing inefficiency The White House committed about \$40 billion in federal funds to subsidize Medicare HMOs over the next decade because these private plans have proved less efficient than the traditional Medicare program and are unable to compete without the subsidy.

4 Fattening the pharmaceutical giants The administration pressed members of Congress to pass a Medicare drug bill that will cost at least \$570 billion over the next decade yet leave seniors with paltry drug cov-

patent law and trade regulations to keep affordable drugs off the market in the United States and in the Third World, soaking U.S. consumers and causing countless unnecessary deaths elsewhere from HIV. Among his other assaults on healthcare, Bush: forced the Food and Drug Administration to abandon objectivity and kowtow to drug and medical device makers; made scientific work at the National Institutes of Health subservient to fundamentalist religious tenets; threatened reproductive rights; protected U.S. tobacco and junk-food producers against international efforts to reign in health hazards; and put yet another generation of soldiers on the road to post traumatic stress disorder by ordering them to fight an unjust and unpopular war. In sum, Bush has taken every opportunity to pander to fundamentalism and corporate profiteering, no matter the cost in lives.

SEPTEMBER 2004

- 7** Dick Cheney declares at a campaign stop in Iowa: "It's absolutely essential that eight weeks from today, on November 2, that we make the right choice, because if we make the wrong choice then the danger is that we'll get hit again."
- 8** 1,001 U.S. soldiers killed during Operation Iraqi Freedom.
- 13** President Bush and House Republicans allow the federal ban on assault weapons to expire.
- 13** Iranian official announces that the country could resume uranium enrichment "within a few months"; Britain's Royal Institute of International Affairs concludes "the real long-term geopolitical winner of the 'War on Terror' could be Iran."
- 23** Donald Rumsfeld hints that Iraqi election may be limited to three-fourths of the country because of increasing violence.
- 23** Standing beside Prime Minister Allawi in the Rose Garden, Bush claims "nearly 100,000 fully trained and equipped Iraqi soldiers, police officers, and other security personnel are working today"; Pentagon documents show only 8,169 have completed full, eight-week training.

- 25** Iraqi Health Ministry statistics show allied forces and Iraqi police are killing twice the number of Iraqis—mostly civilians—as the insurgents; officials announce ministry will no longer provide casualty statistics.

OCTOBER 2004

- 2** One-third of "individual ready reserve" soldiers called up by the Army to serve in Iraq and Afghanistan fail to report for duty.
- 6** Chief U.S. weapons inspector Charles Duelfer reports that Iraq had no biological or chemical weapons and no nuclear program before the U.S. invasion; Duelfer finds no evidence that Iraq produced any WMDs after 1991.

NOVEMBER

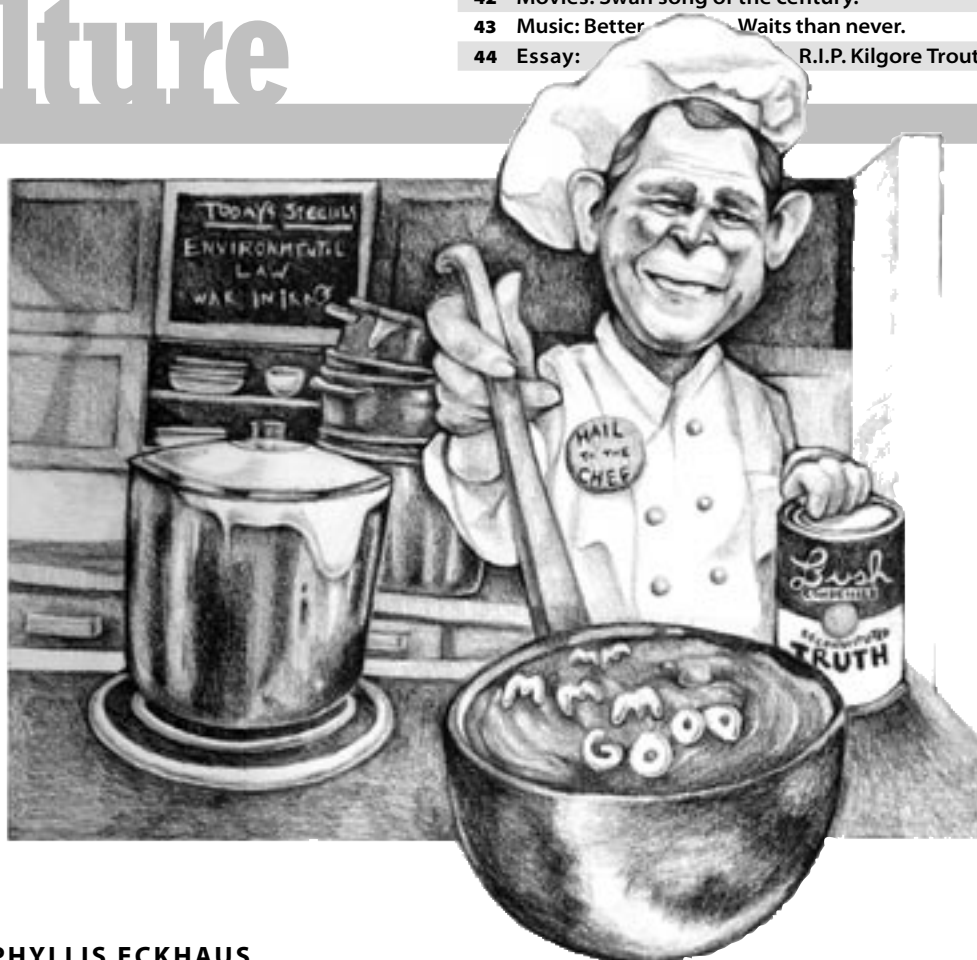
- 2** Election Day.

This timeline originally appeared in the summer 2004 edition of Dissent magazine.



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- 44 Essay: _____ R.I.P. Kilgore Trout.

ILLUSTRATION: SARAH OATES



BY PHYLLIS ECKHAUS

Recipe for Disaster

Never mind the latest *Matrix* or *Star Wars* cinematic extravaganza. In this era of sequels, the biggest blockbuster is the *Return of the Reaganites*, a George W. Bush production featuring a cast of thieving thousands. This is the sequel to die for,

perhaps literally, as the forces of the right consolidate power, subvert the laws and sabotage the government while ransacking on a global scale. As two new books make abundantly clear, Bush & Co. have perfected robber baron tactics of deceit and destruction, applying them to issues as seemingly disparate as the environment and the war on terror.

It's instructive to recall James Watt, Reagan's first Secretary of the Interior, who openly disavowed any responsibility to the public as he dismantled his department and sought to sell off public lands at fire sale prices. Watt cited the approaching apocalypse in his defense, declaring, "I do not know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns." Watt resigned

following a firestorm of protest; in the intervening decades, his ideological heirs have learned to present rabid extremism and profiteering in a more persuasive package, masking their agenda with secrecy and lies.

In *Crimes Against Nature*, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. documents Bush & Co.'s astonishing success stealthily sabotaging existing environmental laws through regulatory revisions. When a federal judge ruled against "mountain-topping"—a form of strip mining involving the demolition of mountaintops and the subsequent disposal of millions of gallons of toxic sludge—a former coal lobbyist who's now a Bush deputy rewrote the regulations to qualify the sludge as "fill" rather than waste subject to federal oversight.

When litigator Kennedy won his case against factory hog farms, which dump a brain-damaging “fecal marinade” into the waterways of 34 states, the Bush administration gathered Big Pork to write new regulations exempting the industry from the Clean Water Act.

Bush has applied Texas-tested devolution strategies to finally realize the Reagan Revolution of government in lockstep with corporate power—and the long-term impact extends beyond environmental consequences. For generations, we’ve been protected by a “permanent government” of civil servants who’ve insulated us from the excesses of our elected leaders. Bush has battered this beneficent bureaucracy. Kennedy observes that as part of a federal plan to outsource 425,000 federal jobs, “thousands of environmental science positions are being contracted out” to industry hacks. Concerns about conflicts of interest have become passé. When the courts directed the Bush administration to start regulating atrazine—which causes grotesque deformities in frogs—it outsourced the job of oversight to Sygenta, the same firm that manufactures the cancer-causing pesticide.

Kennedy’s polemic lays out what would be a vast conspiracy, except that so much of it is happening in view of a public, press and Congress without the will to see or stop it. Alas, this is not a story of government incompetence: The White House has ruthlessly effectuated the agenda of its corporate base, putting the sleaziest industry advocates in top policy positions, from Cheney on down. The union of business and government interests is so complete, Kennedy doesn’t hesitate to use the f-word, quoting a dictionary definition of fascism as “a dictatorship of the extreme right, typically through the merging of state and business leadership together with

Chain of Command

By Seymour M. Hersh
HarperCollins
394 pages, \$25.95

Crimes Against Nature

By Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
HarperCollins
244 pages, \$21.95

belligerent nationalism.”

Others express shock at the startling ways this presidency puts American lives at risk. In “Pollution and Deception at Ground Zero” (www.sierra-club.org), a Sierra Club report released in August, author Suzanne Mattei catalogues the fantastic efforts of the Bush administration to hide the huge public health hazard created by the smoldering Twin Towers, the world’s largest incineration pit of industrial materials. In the days following the attack, the Environmental Protection Agency—in press releases rewritten by the White House—repeatedly assured the public that the air at Ground Zero was safe, despite government readings showing asbestos in the air and dust as caustic as drain cleaner.

Mattei details the lengths to which the feds went to reinvent reality, jettisoning established scientific procedures and expertise in order not to find the toxic pollution obvious to everyone who looked. As one angry rescue worker told Mattei, “What the EPA did was like using a colander with giant holes, and then saying ‘Look, there’s no spaghetti.’” Government scientists attempted to protect public health, but as the heads of 19 EPA locals complained, their “professional work [was] subverted by political pressure applied by the White House.”

Chain of Command, Seymour Hersh’s new book on the White House’s war on terror, reveals the same pattern of deceit and despotism in the administration’s conduct of foreign affairs.

Hersh presents layer upon layer of fact, and his densely documented work is more frightening than a horror movie.

Hersh describes how a “can-do” crew of ideological cowboys consistently overrode the objections of public servants, condemning their cautions as cowardice and disloyalty. Repeated warnings about out-of-control interrogation practices at Guantánamo were cast aside, as Defense Secretary Rumsfeld insisted that coercion and torture could serve as shortcuts to obtain “actionable intelligence.” Rumsfeld proceeded with plans to apply Guantánamo tactics in Iraq, as Bush unilaterally and secretly suspended the rules of conventional warfare. Similarly, Bush & Co. overrode the chorus of insider objections to their claim that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction, setting up a special office of ideologues to promulgate “noble lies” on behalf of war. And as the invasion of Iraq grew imminent, the White House slashed and burned

the plans prepared by the U.S. Central Command, dramatically downsizing projections of needed troops and supplies.

These savagely shortsighted moves have done nothing to make America safe. Indeed, the world has turned furiously against us. Why would the White House continue along this road to disaster?

Blind greed fortified by hubris is the answer. At *Chain of Command*’s conclusion, Hersh plaintively asks, “How did eight or nine neoconservatives who believed that war in Iraq was the answer to international terrorism get their way?” His oddly credulous question overlooks the multitudes inside and outside government who stood to profit—from Iraqi oil, reconstruction contracts and our now more than \$536 billion military budget. Bush & Co. are not bumbler; they just don’t care about the public or the future. After all, the apocalypse is nigh. ■

PHYLLIS ECKHAUS is a writer in New York.

ART SPACE



Corporate Fundamentalist, by Hugh A. Gran, from *Peace Signs: The Anti-War Movement Illustrated* (Trafalgar Square Publishing), was one of several images removed from an exhibit at Ohio University after complaints from “distinguished professors.” (One complained that the offending pieces showed the president in “an unflattering, war-like manner.”) After cries of censorship from students and the faculty senate, the objectionable material was restored to the exhibit, which was titled “Art of War: The Effect of War on Art-making.”



BY KEVIN CANFIELD

Better Waits Than Never

Tom Waits' long career has been marked by an aversion to explicitly political music. Dim light bulbs and graveyards, rifles that ring out at dawn, mules and very tall men, old dogs, old people, Oldsmobiles—all have

been celebrated in Waits' songs. Never, though, has the eccentric and impossibly rugged-voiced singer waded into unabashed political commentary.

Which is why it's stunning to realize that Waits' new record, *Real Gone*, contains what is surely (for my money, at least) the most essential song inspired by the war in Iraq. Even that may be selling it short. "Day After Tomorrow" is not the best anti-war song ever written (that honor, again, for my money, goes to Bob Dylan's "Masters of War") but if I'm assembling a double album of political-war songs, Waits' entry definitely makes the cut. (The song also appears on the Barsuk Records recently released *Future Soundtrack for*

Real Gone Tom Waits Epitaph

America.)

A sort of audio journal told from the perspective of a soldier whose tour in Iraq is coming to a close, "Tomorrow" opens with the unnamed narrator getting some mail from home. He's a Midwestern kid—raised, he tells the listener, in northern Illinois—and has managed to hold on to some of his boyish naïveté. "I still believe that there's gold/At the end of the world," sings Waits as he begins to sketch his character. The soldier's spirits are buoyed by the knowledge that he'll soon be boarding a plane; he's due

to arrive in America in just a couple days.

Accompanied by only a pair of slow guitars, Waits continues: The song's young enlistee is fed up with the drudgeries and dangers of wartime service. He misses cleaning up the yard in autumn and clearing snow from the driveway. He longs for his girlfriend.

Waits will be 55 in December and has been making largely uncategorizable records for 30 years. Yet his uncanny empathy for his protagonist makes it feel as if the singer himself had spent a year in Baghdad. That he understands the young man's provincial longings, his fears, his confusion and his anger becomes clearer with every line.

With steely calm, the young

soldier notes that he and his peers have been fed "lies" since the start of the war, that the violence that surrounds him is deeply unnerving. Though we're not told his chief reason for joining the service, whatever illusions he might have possessed have long since been shattered: "I'm not fighting for justice/I'm not fighting for freedom/I am fighting for my life and/Another day in the world here."

Waits' lyrics are stark and moving, but it is the way he delivers them that makes this such a powerful song. Betraying the sort of inner turmoil that reflects a standoff between resignation and idealism, Waits works his way patiently through the six-plus-minute song. He has an instinctive sense that informs his decision to linger on certain words while quickly dispatching with others. Near the very end Waits tells us that his young soldier is celebrating a birthday, alone on the other side of the world. (I won't quote the last four lines; they are perfect and should be heard, not read.) For all of his strengths, Waits every so often has written vaguely maudlin lyrics. None of that is present here.

Writing a song from the perspective of a soldier or a bystander caught in a war is not unique; it's been done by everyone from Billy Bragg to Metallica to, most recently, Steve Earle. But it's hard to imagine a song that does so more effectively, more sympathetically, than "Tomorrow."

A mix of hollers, unusual sounds, idiosyncratic lyrics and thunderous percussion, the rest of *Real Gone* confirms that Waits is as sonically creative as ever. And "Tomorrow" reveals him to be a great political songwriter. Who knew? ■

KEVIN CANFIELD writes regularly on music for *In These Times*.



The Ramones: They didn't mature; they just got older.

BY MICHAEL ATKINSON

Swan Song of the Century

Now, Johnny Ramone is dead. Like a chilling, not-so-funny answer to *Spinal Tap*—the fictional rock band whose drummers kept dying in absurd ways—only the Ramones' drummers, three of them in 20 years,

still survive. (OK, CJ, the late-in-the-game replacement bassist, is still walking and talking, but that's like counting Kenny Jones in the history of The Who.) First Joey, the Frankenstein-monster ur-misfit singer, his voice a straight-outta-Queens mutant-goat bleat, succumbed to lymphoma in 2001. Then Dee Dee, the archetypal post-Iggy hustler-hophead bassist, finally OD'd in 2002. This September, Johnny, whose reactionary militancy provided the group with its glue and whose aboriginal guitar style amounted to assault and battery, let prostate cancer take him. The drummers are, by all accounts, aging gracefully.

Christ, I love the Ramones, but we're not talking geeky, punk-is-civilization-defining-art, hyperbolic-rock-critic love. I love them the way I love chocolate and good German

beer, the smell of playground asphalt and the weight of my wife's breasts in my hands. I love them for the buoyant, angry, joyous, innocent fact of them in my life, and now that I've seen Jim Fields and Michael Gramaglia's bio-doc *End of the Century*, I love them even more. All successful rock bands beat the odds of anonymity, industry corruption and popular whim; the Ramones also beat the odds of talentlessness. As someone recounts in the film, Johnny replied to the nascent Sex Pistols' admission that they can't play with a grunt: "Wait'll you see us, we stink." No one should've been surprised when, in 1975 or thereabouts, Johnny and the boys reinvented rock as apocalyptic hailstorm, and did so with little more in their arsenal than guile and a sense of what music shouldn't play and sound and

look like. Anyone who knew Elvis knew that attitude is all it takes, and the swollen silliness of pop at the time demanded an oppositional response.

Quite apparently, the Ramones were not poetic souls, but because they universalized the pitiful ire of every unhappy teenager, they couldn't help but muster poetic, heartfelt reactions. Every obituarist chronicling the guys' domino drop these last four years has been thunderstruck by the intimate connection they made with the group as youngsters. But if we all grew up, the Ramones never did. As the movie makes clear, Joey, Johnny and Dee Dee were life-long martyrs to adolescent-reject misery—they never matured, just got older, never changed how they looked or what they played, never stopped fighting with each other and resenting

the world for how unaccepted they were as teens. They remain, in fact, impossible not to love.

A conventional hodgepodge of interviews and video clips, the documentary is profoundly mournful, albeit kneecapped by the lack of decent performance footage. (The Ramones were never popular phenoms, so you don't have a *The Kids Are Alright* array of material to sort through.) All the stories told about the band's initial impressions are the same: On stage, they were the sonic equivalent to a sudden fist in the face, playing short, defiantly simple, hellaciously loud songs, no pauses, no patter, ripping it out as if they had to hurry before the roof caved in. Though doggedly self-defined, in tone and dress, as a homogenized gang, here individuals emerge. Tommy the pioneer drummer-conceptualizer seems relieved he quit the band, while Dee Dee affects the junkie's *sang froid*. Johnny is as bullnosed in interview as he was when he was bleeding on his guitar strings, but he's also surprisingly open and frank. Joey is the most melancholy figure, a still-shy hair disaster whose success on the stage was an indisputably heroic triumph over social ineptness, obsessive-compulsive neuroses and the heartbreak of having Johnny steal his woman.

They're dead, but they're still here, in my life. As Keith Phipps, writing on *The Onion* Web site, puts it, "For all the darkness and disappointment that dogged the group, no one else has produced a noise quite so life-affirming as the band's trademark '1-2-3-4' count-off." The film's title is fabulously apt: If little in American culture matters as much and lasts as well as the Ramones did in Our Century's final quarter, now we can say it's finally over. Adios, amigos. ■

MICHAEL ATKINSON writes on film for *In These Times*.



BY KURT VONNEGUT

Requiem for a Dreamer

Editor's note: What follows is a conversation between Kurt Vonnegut and out-of-print science fiction writer Kilgore Trout. It was to be their last. Trout committed suicide by drinking Drano at midnight on October 15

in Cohoes, New York, after a female psychic using tarot cards predicted that the environmental calamity George W. Bush would once again be elected president of the most powerful nation on the planet by a five-to-four decision of the Supreme Court, which included "100 percent of the black vote."

TROUT: I've never voted in my whole damn life. I didn't want to be *complicit*. But is it time I did?

KV: The planet's immune system is obviously trying to get rid of us, and high time!

But sure, go vote for somebody. What the hell.

TROUT: Everybody's so ignorant.

KV: The overwhelming popularity of President Bush, in spite of everything, finally shows us what the American people, whom we have so sentimentalized for so long, *a la* Norman Rockwell, really are, thanks to TV and purposely lousy public schools: ignorant. Count on it!

TROUT: You ever meet anybody who was really smart?

KV: Only one: Saul Steinberg, the graphic artist who's dead now. Everybody I know is dead now, present company excepted. I could ask Saul anything, and six seconds would pass, and then he would give me a perfect answer. He *growled* a perfect answer. He was born in Rumania, and, according to him, he was born into a house where "the geese peeked in the windows."

TROUT: Like what kind of questions?

KV: I said, "Saul, what should I think about Picasso?" Six seconds went by, and then

he growled, "God put him on Earth to show us what it's like to be *really* rich." I said, "Saul, I'm a novelist, and many of my friends are novelists, but I can't help feeling that some of them are in a very different business from mine, even though I like their books a lot. What would make me feel that way?" Six seconds went by, and then he growled, "It is very simple: There are two kinds of artists, and one is not superior to the other. But one kind responds to the history of his or her art so far, and the other responds to life itself?"

I said, "Saul, are you gifted?" Six seconds went by, and then he growled, "No. But what we respond to in any work of art is the artist's struggle against his or her limitations."

TROUT: OK.

KV: You seem unimpressed.

TROUT: I said, "OK."

KV: You said it so *emptily*.

TROUT: Sorry. You know me: Always running on empty.

KV: Somebody else smart? OK, try this: After the Second World War I enrolled in the graduate division of the Anthropology Department of the University of Chicago, the most conceited university in the country. And in a seminar for about eight of us, half of us vets on the GI Bill of Rights, my favorite professor, in fact my thesis advisor, put this Socratic question to us: "What is it an artist *does*?"

TROUT: Hold on: What makes Chicago so conceited?

KV: That it isn't Harvard.

TROUT: Got it: That it isn't high society.

KV: Bingo. Anyway, I'm sure we all came up with smart-

ass answers, since a graduate seminar in any subject is a form of improv theater. But the only answer I remember is the one he gave: "An artist says, 'I can't do anything about the chaos in the universe or my country, or even in my own miserable life, but I can at least make this piece of paper or canvas, or blob of clay or chunk of marble, exactly what it should be.'"

TROUT: OK.

KV: Did you forget to take your *Viagra* today?

TROUT: Very funny. But what he said an artist does is what I do every time I brush my teeth or tie my shoes. You thought this guy was smart? He's an asshole.

KV: Look, when you put a piece of paper in your typewriter, don't you try to make it exactly what it should be?

TROUT: No, I just effing write.

KV: What are you effing writing now?

TROUT: It's about how the future has as much to do with the present as the past does. Giraffes can only have come from the future. There's no way evolution in the past would have let something that defenseless and impractical live for 15 minutes.

KV: If you say so.

TROUT: Try this: The First World War was caused by the second one. Otherwise the first one makes no sense, wasn't about anything. And all Picasso had to do was paint pictures that were already hanging in museums in the future.

KV: OK.

TROUT: Just trying to be Einstein. You never know. But hey, the two people you said

were so smart were both men. Women say smart things, too. I went walking with a woman the other day, if you can believe it, and I stopped to retie my shoes, and she said, "Every time I go for a walk with a man he always has to stop to retie his shoes. Why won't men tie double knots? A fear of commitment?" How's that for anthropology, the science of man? I'll bet they didn't teach you about men and shoelaces at Chicago.

KV: That isn't anthropology. That's sociology.

TROUT: What's the difference? I've often wondered.

KV: A sociologist is paid by the Sociology Department. An anthropologist is paid by the Anthropology Department.

TROUT: Glad to have that cleared up.

KV: Knowledge is power.

TROUT: Well, I'm off. *Ciao, adios* and *aloha*.

KV: Whither bound?

TROUT: Back to Cohoes for an AA meeting.

KV: But you're not an alcoholic.

TROUT: It's the only place I can pick up women. They have their defenses down. "Hello, I'm Kilgore Trout and I'm an alcoholic." And I've met this babe named Flamingo who is a professional psychic. She's going to tell me our country's fortune. Who'll win the next election.

KV: OK

TROUT: Take care.

KV: You too. ■



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Cockfight

Continued from back cover

DURING THIS ELECTION, GAY AND lesbian activist groups are buckling under the pressure to remain silent about their existence. They haven't talked about gay marriage and they're not going to. I accept the fact that John Kerry cannot endorse gay marriage until the election. At this point, I don't give a shit. Anybody but Bush. Anybody. And when we do get Kerry into office, then we really go for it. Hit 'em where they live. Get all the wedding planners to go on strike.

All the busy-body "Christian" people—when they're not preparing for the Rapture—are trying to make gay people miserable. I don't see why our lives affect theirs in the least. They point to us as evidence of Satan in the world. Don't they realize that Satan is intolerance, that every time they practice injustice, another demon gets his wings?

The Pope recently castigated the media for making gays look normal. Yeah, he's a real good judge of normal. With the gold dress, and the matching gold hat, living up in the Vatican with 500 men, surrounded by the finest antiques in the world. You go, girl!

But it is the religious right who are fucking scary, because they're out of control. Even the Satanists are saying, "Wow, you guys are being really mean."

THERE IS ALSO A WAR AGAINST WOMEN, against women's rights. I was at the March for Women's Lives in Washington. It was huge. I got there on Friday—the march was on Sunday—and women were already protesting in the streets. I was worried they were going to shoot their wad. But then I remembered that women can protest multiple times. There were lots of people, and great speakers. Gloria Steinem spoke, and Susan Sarandon spoke, and Paris Hilton spoke—"No more wire hangers! Wire hangers make those weird creases in your sweaters!"

I saw Ann Coulter the other day on a show called "Scarborough Country." I don't know why Joe Scarborough is not on Fox. It seems as if he escaped from Fox News and is on a rampage on MSNBC. I guess FOX News started to send out spores and grow shows on other networks. It's all very conservative, very angry stuff.

So Ann Coulter is on talking about how *USA Today* fired her because, when covering the Democratic Convention, she wrote, "Here at the Spawn of Satan convention in Boston, conservatives are deploying a series of covert signals to identify one another, much like gay men do. My allies are the ones wearing crosses or American flags." I'm such a feminist, but every time I looked at Ann I got so angry. I'm like, "You know that's why women shouldn't work."

ANOTHER ONE OF MY ISSUES IS THE death penalty. I'm opposed to it, so I write a lot of governors' letters asking for stays of execution. The other day I had to write, "Dear Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger." And that felt so embarrassing, so frightening. The only thing he's done so far in office is, let's see, well, he called Democrats "girly men," and then he shortened the stay for animals in an animal shelter from six days to three days. That's so mean! "The kitty must die after three days. The kitty will be terminated after 72 hours. *Hasta la vista, kitty.*" Of course, the animal activists heard about it and slammed him. Then he was all, "The kitty may live, I'm sorry." Animal activists are fierce. They are the most terrifying people. I just wish they would start working for human rights. We need them. Desperately. You don't fuck with vegans. They are mean. They are scary. They are hungry.

WHEN SOMEBODY INSULTS ME AND says I'm fat, or ugly, or not funny, or stupid, or whatever, I can argue with them. But when somebody says something about my race, I feel it, because that's who I am. And when somebody attacks your sexuality it hurts, because that's who you are. You can't change that. Sexuality and race are those central parts of ourselves that we can't remove or control.

When something hurts me I have to say something. If I don't it will just burn me up. Living in America as a minority feels like dying of a thousand paper cuts, and I ain't going out like that.

My favorite activist group was from the '80s, ACT UP. They had a great slogan, "Silence Equals Death," which meant that if we don't talk about AIDS we will die of AIDS. I've got a similar slogan for me: "Silence equals nonexistence."

That makes me a problem dinner guest.

At some point during the evening someone will say, "Don't go there." Well, I live there. I bought a house there. I'm going to take you there.

I used to feel so weirdly paranoid talking and saying anything negative about the war or George Bush. But I got over it. I was doing a benefit for MoveOn.org in New York, and this was the week that the crazy right-wing conservatives were all angry because MoveOn had been running an ad that compared Bush with Hitler. And I said, "You know, George Bush is not Hitler. He would be if he applied himself, but he's just lazy!"

I was deluged with hate mail, from the Freerepublic.com site. It wasn't about political discourse. None of it was: "Ms. Cho, I believe you are being unfair to our administration. Please look again at our foreign policy." It was: "You Mongolian chink dyke. Four more years! Go back to your country, pig fucker. Jesus Saves! Four more years!"

So since I wholeheartedly believe in free speech, I took all of their e-mails and I posted them on my Web site and included their return e-mail addresses. And these people who really like George W. Bush, they're not that smart. They had e-mailed me from work. Well, I found out there are people out there who really like me, and who are pissed off to begin with. And they just need that much of a reason to go off. So when I had posted all these e-mails, I inadvertently activated al Gayda. That's one sleeper cell you do not want to wake up. These queens get up on the wrong side of the bed. They started an al Gayda training camp where they offer Pilates. Soon, the apology emails began flooding in. "I'm sorry! You're an American. You're entitled to your opinion. I'm sorry I called you a Mongolian cunt. Please make these gay people leave me alone! I'm afraid! Oh god, hurry, I think Cirque du Soleil is warming up on my lawn!" ■

This fall comedian Margaret Cho has been visiting swing states on a "State of Emergency Tour" (www.margaretocho.com). On October 29 she will perform in Jacksonville, Florida, and on October 30 in Little Rock, Arkansas. Her latest video, Cho Revolution, was released in August. To read an In These Times interview with Cho, visit our Web site at www.inthesetimes.com/site/main/article/995/.

PRESIDENTIAL COCKFIGHT

BY MARGARET CHO

IT'S SUCH A BIZARRE AND weird time in the world.

This presidential race has become the biggest dick contest in history. "Your dick is indecisive!" "Your dick started an unnecessary war!" "Your dick didn't get injured enough in Vietnam!" "Your dick didn't even go to Vietnam!" "Your dick is soft on terrorism!" Has this kind of dick wagging happened before outside of a pro-wrestling context?

It is embarrassing, because you want to believe that our leaders would have some decorum or gentility in the debate to win the most powerful position in the world. It literally is the battle over who gets to be the king of the planet. I want someone with a bit of self control in that position.

Of course, the Republicans started it, so you can't fault Kerry for joining in. After all, the Democrats could stand to do a little mud-slinging. A lot of mud-slinging would be needed just to catch up.

Then there is the Bush administration trying to keep us in a state of panic all the time, like raising the Terror Alert so that we're not at ease but always on edge. And it's always the most ridiculous stuff like, "An ATM was targeted in Midtown Manhattan!"

But I'm so used to raised terror alerts, I'm unaffected. I'm like, "It's orange. Does that mean I have to take off my shoes?" Meanwhile, clog sales have gone through the roof. People think that it's Halliburton that's benefiting from all this; no it's Birkenstock. It's a huge clog/mule cartel conspiring. Slip-on shoes are the future.

I would feel a little bit better if George W. Bush could say the word "nuclear" correctly. You'd think that somebody would have said something by now, that Condoleezza Rice would have gotten up in his face, "Fool! It's 'nu-clear'. I'm gonna have to write it down for you, make you some flash cards."

And I'm very worried about the troops, but I'm also worried that my reproductive rights might be taken away from me. And I'm as scared of terrorism as every one else, but I'm also scared that people over here are getting arrested by the F.B.I. and the I.N.S. for having the wrong last name. And I'm so, so sorry that there's so much starvation in Iraq and so much starvation all over the world, but I am also so, so sorry that there are young girls here starving themselves to death so that they can look like the actresses on TV.

Continued on page 47

